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A

D I S C O U R S E

ON THE

DIVINE ORDINANCE

OF

SINGING PSALMS.

INTENDED TO PROVE,

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| <p>I. That the singing of Psalms is a Part of that social or publick Worship which God hath appointed in his Word.</p> <p>II. That there are Parts of the sacred Scriptures adapted to the Purpose of singing, which ought to be used in the publick Worship of the Church, till the End of Time.</p> <p>III. That the scripture Songs are</p> | <p>the only Forms of Psalmody, which ought to be used in the solemn and publick Worship of the Church.</p> <p>IV. That, in the publick Praises of the Church, the Musick, or outward Part, ought to be conducted with Decency and Simplicity; and in Subserviency to the spiritual Part, which is chiefly to be regarded.</p> |
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To which is added, an APPENDIX, in two numbers.

No. I. Contains a brief History of Psalmody. No. II. Contains a Review of *Dr. Watts's* Imitation of the Psalms of *David*, as corrected and enlarged by *Joel Barlow*.

By JOHN ANDERSON, Minister of the Gospel, and Member of the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania.

P H I L A D E L P H I A :

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P R E F A C E.

WHEN our forefathers, in the sixteenth century, remonstrated against the false doctrine, superstition, and idolatry of the church of Rome, they constantly appealed to the Holy Scriptures as the supreme judge in all controversies of religion : but though the principle of this appeal be the foundation of the Protestant religion ; yet, there are usages, even in churches called *Reformed*, inconsistent with a due adherence to that principle.

It is true, the scripture is greatly abused by those who are not careful to distinguish what is recorded as a ceremonial law or a shadow of good things to come, from what is appointed to be of standing use in the New Testament church. But no more can this abuse justify the introduction of those things into the worship of God which are not mentioned in his word, than the misrepresentation of the law, by some heedless or ill-disposed persons, would justify the utter contempt of it in others. The vanity of the common pleas for uninstituted forms of religious worship, such as, antiquity, human authority, custom, their tendency to promote devotion, has long ago been sufficiently discovered. Yet, unsupported as they are, by right reason or the authority of scripture, those uninstituted forms of worship still keep their ground ; for they please the senses and imagination ; and man's depraved nature, an enemy to the spiritual worship of God, will always prefer what is pleasing to the senses and imagination, to what is of divine institution.

MEN wearied of the unadorned simplicity of spiritual worship, have tried several expedients to render it somewhat entertaining and agreeable. Of these expedients, none has been more applauded, or more generally received, than that which is considered in the following discourse.

THE whole history of the church shews that nothing has contributed more to destroy its peace, than men's obstinate attachment to what themselves or others have added to divine institutions. This is bigotry indeed ; and most of the mournful divisions of the church may justly be ascribed to it.

THE danger, that arises to the souls of men from such human devices, is great and alarming. Taken up with these devices, they forget that it is only through the blessing of God in Christ, upon his own institutions, that we have any ground to expect that communion with him, without which our religious exercises are vain. It is not meant, that, where such corruption in any measure prevails, the word and ordinances of Christ have no saving effect at all. He fulfils in his elect, all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. But we learn from his word, that men's attachment to these devices, where they are once admitted, besides being evil in itself, is inordinate, and attended with an undervaluing and neglect of God's own institutions: for it is in vain to imagine, that men will use moderation in following what ought not to be followed at all.

It may be added, that the Sermon on Psalmody so often referred to in the ensuing discourse, was published last year by the Rev. John Black, pastor of the upper Presbyterian congregation of Marsh Creek: many of the objections are taken from that sermon, because no other publication occurred in which they are stated with more force and plausibility.

THAT God, who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty: the base things, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are; may accompany this publication with his effectual blessing, is, through grace, the prayer of the author.

E R R A T A.

Page 9, line 9, after *praise* read *as well as with prayer*. Page 58, line 5, in the note after *Isai.* for *iv*, read *l*. Page. 36, line 21, from the head of the page after *any*, read *thing*. Page 76, line 6, Delete *all the*.

D I S C O U R S E
O N T H E
D I V I N E O R D I N A N C E
O F
S I N G I N G P S A L M S.

MATTH. xxvi. 30. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.*

WHAT particular hymn or psalm this was, we are not told. That it was (what some suppose) a hymn composed by our Lord himself on that occasion, seems by no means probable, as that it was one of the Old Testament Psalms. That none of these were suitable to the new ordinance which he had been celebrating is easily asserted; but may as easily be denied; and with more reason; for the substance of this ordinance was nothing but what the church had been singing of, along from the giving of the first promise. It is allowed on all hands that the church of God had been accustomed to sing some of the psalms on similar occasions. It was not our Lord's business to lay aside the use of the Old Testament scriptures; but rather to recommend and encourage it. Out of the book of psalms, particularly, he used frequently to quote passages and apply them to himself. Besides, if our Lord had dictated a new hymn on the occasion, it is natural to think, that so remarkable and uncommon a circumstance, would hardly have been passed over by the evangelist unnoticed: Whereas there is not the same reason to expect that the evangelist would be so particular, on the supposition that our Lord sang one of the psalms that were in common use. At any rate, there is no example here to warrant any man's dictating new hymns or psalms to be used in public worship.

WITH respect to what was sung on this occasion, we can gather no more from the original word used by the evangelist, than that it was some composition adapted to the purpose of *singing praises*.*

THE apostle, in Coloss. iii. 16. gives us three names for such compositions; *Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*. *Psalms* seems to be the general name: Hence that collection of them which comprehends so great a variety, is called *the book of Psalms*. *Hymns and spiritual songs* are particular sorts to be found among the Psalms: Thus the 145th and following Psalms are *Hymns*, which have praise for their more immediate and express purpose: and those entitled, *Maschil*, that is, giving instruction, may be called *spiritual songs*, as being more directly intended for promoting our spiritual knowledge.† All these sorts (whatever explication of the terms be preferred) are to be found among the songs of the Old Testament: and therefore it cannot be said, with any colour of reason, that they are not here intended. Nor can it be any argument to this purpose, that the word of Christ is said to be the matter of these songs; for it is not possible for any who believe (as all Christians profess to do, who are not Socinians) that the Spirit of Christ dictated what we have written in the Old Testament, as well as what we have in the New, to be a perpetual rule to the church of God on earth, to doubt whether the one be the word of Christ as well as the other; or whether the word which the apostle exhorted the Colossians to have dwelling in them richly was the word contained in those scriptures which Christ enjoins us to search, as what abundantly testify of him. It is true, an

* The Greek verb is rendered *to sing praises*, in Acts xvi. 25. It may be observed for the sake of such as are unacquainted with that language, that there is no substantive noun in the original answering the word *hymn*; it might be rendered, *when they had sung*; for the English verb is sometimes used, in this appropriated sense, to signify an ordinary part of divine worship.

† The explication here offered is not pretended to be founded in the etymology of the words; but was suggested by what appears to be the most ordinary acceptance of them. An observation, which has been frequently made, may be here added, in the words of Dr. Gill, upon Ephes. v. "These three words answer to *Mitsmorim, Tebillim, Sbirim*, the several titles of David's psalms; from whence it seems to be the intention of the apostle, that these should be sung in gospel churches."

article of divine truth, especially an article to which we are called, at any time; in a particular manner, to bear testimony, may be called, emphatically, a *word* or *saying* of Christ: So this phrase may be understood in the following texts: *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me or of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.** *Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word.†* In such passages, some word of Christ, some article of his doctrine, must be understood, which, being a part of our public profession, exposeth us to the reproach of the world, and of which we are, therefore, in danger of being ashamed. But when we speak of the duty of having the word of Christ dwelling in us richly, it must be understood of the word of God in general, that is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. In short, it appears that the duty of singing is inculcated in this text, and in Ephes. v. 19. but if we would know what particular forms of Psalmody ought to be used in the public worship of the church, we must make some further use of our Lord's injunction, to *search the scriptures.*

WHATEVER was the hymn which our Lord and his disciples now sung, it was, no doubt, suitable to the occasion‡; to the conclusion of the solemn ordinances which they had been celebrating, and to his entrance upon the astonishing scene of his last sufferings. Christ had now to *drink up the brook in the way,* the torrent of divine wrath due to our sins; and there is no

* Mark viii. 38.

† Revel. iii. 8.

‡ It is the opinion of many commentators, that what our Lord sung on this occasion was the *Hallel*, which the Jews were obliged to sing on the night of the passover, consisting of six psalms, namely, the 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, and 118. Part of this Hallel, (namely, the 113, and 114, psalms) was sung before the eating of the paschal lamb, and the rest immediately after. "Now" says the learned Dr. Gill, "the last part of the Hallel, Christ deferred to the close of his supper; there being many things pertinent to him, and proper on this occasion, particularly, Psal. cxv. and cxvi. 12—15 and cxviii. 22—27. And the Jews themselves say, at "the sorrows of the Messiah" are contained in this part. That this the hymn which Christ and his apostles sung, may be rather thought, than that it was one of his own composing, since not only he but all the disciples sung it; and, therefore, must be what they were acquainted with."

doubt but that he now sung in the faith of *lifting up his head* in his resurrection and ascension. Nor is it to be doubted that the faith of the disciples was really exercised on this occasion, though it suffered a most dismal eclipse a little afterward.

ON account of the attempts which are made in our day to corrupt the divine ordinance of singing psalms, we hope it will not be deemed unseasonable to take occasion from the words now read, to enter into a particular consideration of the subject, and to endeavour some illustration, as the Lord is pleased to direct, of the following propositions :

I. That the singing of Psalms is a part of that social or publick worship which God hath appointed in his word.

II. That there are parts of the sacred scriptures adapted to the purpose of singing, which ought to be used in the publick worship of the church, till the end of time.

III. That the scripture songs are the only forms of Psalmody, which ought to be used in the solemn and publick worship of the church, till the end of time.

IV. That, in the publick praises of the church, the music, or outward part, ought to be conducted with decency and simplicity; and in subserviency to the spiritual part, which is chiefly to be regarded.

We proceed to a brief consideration of

The First Proposition.

That the singing of psalms is a part of that social or public worship which God hath appointed in his word.

It is, indeed, a natural sentiment, that the perfections and works of him that made us, should be celebrated in songs of praise. As men's affections towards other objects are excited and expressed by poetical compositions and musical sounds; so it seems fit, that the same means should be used to express and promote those affections of love, reverence, admiration, and gladness, that ought to be exercised in the worship of the Supreme Being. Hence the Heathens used to honour their false gods with songs of praise; both being parts of that worship which right reason directs us to give to the true God.

BUT as it is the prerogative of the most high God to prescribe the manner of his own worship; so our proper warrant for this religious service lies in the precepts and approved examples of his word. To this purpose is that which we have in the 105th Psalm: *Sing unto him: sing psalms: talk ye of all his wondrous deeds among the people.* Again in the 30th Psalm: *Thou hast girded me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee.* David calls his tongue his glory, as it was employed in uttering the praises of the Lord; the most noble and honourable exercise in which a rational creature can ever be engaged. We have a particular account of the practice of the Old Testament church in this part of divine worship. Singing the praises of God, being plainly of a moral nature, can never be considered as belonging to the ceremonial part of Old Testament worship; and, therefore, the precepts and examples recorded in the Old Testament are a sufficient warrant for our practice in this matter. In the New Testament, we have precepts on this subject in the passages already mentioned of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*; we have the example of Paul and Silas singing praises in the prison at midnight; and that of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, as our text informs us, in the same night wherein he was betrayed, joined with his disciples in singing a Psalm. Nor can it well be controverted, that singing, of some sort or another, has always had a place in the publick worship of the church of God, since the days of David and Solomon. The purity of this ordinance is the more to be contended for, in regard that, of all the exercises of God's worship on earth, it bears the nearest resemblance to the eternal exercise of the

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* See also James v. 13.

saints in heaven. Let us hold in just abhorrence the opinion of the Quakers, who would banish this, with the sacraments and other ordinances of Christ, out of his church. Let us detest the ungodly practice of some, who, from false notions of delicacy and good-breeding, choose to sit silent at church in the time of singing. And let us beware of encouraging the introduction of those modes of singing, which, being too complex and artificial, tend to impose silence on a great part of our worshipping assemblies.

The Second Proposition.

That there are parts of the sacred scriptures adapted to the purpose of singing, which ought to be used in the publick worship of the church, till the end of time.

WHAT we have to offer for explaining and confirming this proposition, shall be comprehended under four observations.

THE first is, *That there are portions of scripture peculiarly adapted to this part of divine worship.* This is evidently the case with the book of Psalms. Let us observe the suitableness both of the matter and form of them to such a design. As to the matter, it is such as the glory of God and the welfare of our souls are most nearly concerned in; consisting of truths concerning the perfections and the works of God; concerning the person and offices of our Immanuel; concerning the character and condition of natural men; concerning the character, afflictions and consolations of the saints; concerning the Lord's manner of dealing with the church, and with her enemies. Every part of the Psalms is calculated for promoting the knowledge of God and of ourselves, or for reproof and direction, or for the support of our faith and hope. As to the form, they bear the title of Psalms or Songs, which implies that they are designed to be used in singing. Their brevity in general is well adapted to that end: as also, the concise, abrupt manner of expression; the lively turns, the bold, and almost continual use of metaphors, exclamations, personifications, and

all the other figures which are used to give force and animation to poetical composition.* These are the characteristics of the scripture songs; and these were, no doubt, designed by him who knows our frame, to be subservient to those spiritual affections with which our meditations on the matter of the psalms ought to be attended.

* As the same excellencies for which a work of human art is celebrated, may be observed in an infinitely eminent degree in the works of God; so many of the same beauties which have been admired in Pindar and other lyric poets, are conspicuous in the scripture songs: though the former, it must be owned, be to the latter, but as the cold and unprofitable glittering of a glow worm, to the animating influence of the sun shining in his strength. It may, therefore, be of use here, to consider a little the nature of that species of human composition, called, the Ode. The writer of an Ode is not confined to the track marked out by any preceding poet or critic. He may press forward with a generous freedom to attain his end: only he must take care that all be natural, easy, and unaffected. The exordium or introduction should be short; so that the reader may find himself engaged in the principal subject of the poem before he be aware. In the conduct of it, the various matter ought to be so disposed, that every sentiment and expression may derive new grace and energy from the propriety of its place or connexion: which connexion must appear by the bold and striking exhibition of the things themselves, and not by a formal use of connecting particles. The conclusion ought to be, in a great measure, abrupt and unexpected; and yet, evidently, the finishing of a judicious plan. As to the style and manner of composition, it must be varied according to the subject; sometimes more gay and flowery, sometimes more grave and sublime; but always of peculiar delicacy, and such as, the more closely it is examined, approves itself the more to a person of real taste and discernment. The Ode delights in metaphors and images taken from the works of nature; in allusions to the most interesting passages of history; in short but lively descriptions; and, when it rises to a very sublime or pathetic strain, in frequent personifications.

As to the Hebrew numbers or versification, we know little: it was well adapted, no doubt, to the musick of the Israelites.

But who, that has any taste for poetical composition, can read the scripture songs without observing and admiring the force and elegance of expression; the beauty and grandeur of metaphors and sentiments; and the graces which arise from a happy arrangement?

We may observe three classes of the scripture songs. Those of the first class have *sweetness* for their distinguishing character. They represent the mild and placid affections; love, desire, hope, moderate joy or grief. Thus the royal Psalmist, while he was an exile in the wilderness of Judea, sweetly expresses love and desire in the sixty third Psalm. The eightieth represents grief joined with some hope; the eighty fifth, hope approaching to joy. The ninety second is, throughout, the language of a sincere, but temperate gladness. What can be sweeter than the representation of God

OBSERVATION II. *These psalms were given to the church as forms of Psalmody, and not as patterns according to which other forms were to be composed for the use of the church in her public worship.* The Lord's design in giving these songs is to be gathered from scripture examples of the use of them. We have plenty of examples of the use of them as forms of psalmody, but none of persons without inspiration composing psalms for public worship, in imitation of the inspired songs. Many of the psalms are directed to the chief musician, or to him who was the leader in the divine songs of the tabernacle or the temple, to be immediately used in the worship of it: And we read, in the twenty-ninth chapter of the second book of Chronicles, towards the close, that *Hezekiah the king, and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer.*

OBJECTION. Are there not Christians qualified to compose hymns, as well as to pray, after the scripture patterns? "The gracious Saviour has provided and left in his word, and by the ordinary influences of his Holy Spirit, sufficient furniture of light, gifts and graces, for all the parts of religious worship, without leaving a system, or liturgy, in the precise words of which we should either pray, or praise, or preach."*

ANSWER. I. The measure of our attainments, or of the influences of the Holy Spirit with which we are favoured, is, by

as a Shepherd, in the twenty third Psalm? To this class belong several Psalms which celebrate the beneficence of God in his works of grace and providence, such as the sixty fifth; or the loveliness of concord among brethren, as the hundred and thirty third. The second class is of those Psalms which have *sublimity* for their distinguishing character; as the eighteenth, the twenty fourth, the sixty eighth, the fiftieth, the song of Moses at the Red sea, and that of Habakkuk. The same ode or Psalm, in different parts or expressions, often affords striking examples *both of sweetness and of sublimity*; as the eighty first, the ninety first, the seventy seventh, the nineteenth, and others. The Psalms of this middle character form a third class. The reader who would see this subject handled at length, and in a learned and judicious manner, may consult Dr. Lowth's elegant *Prælections de sacra poësa Hebræorum.*

* A Sermon on Psalmody, by Mr. Black. Page 38.

no means, the rule of duty. To suppose that we are warranted to do any thing, merely because we are furnished with the means of doing it, is a most dangerous principle, pregnant, indeed, with all the excesses of libertinism and enthusiasm. These two questions, What is our duty? and How we may be encouraged and enabled to do it? are always to be kept distinct. The precepts and examples of the written word afford a complete answer to the former; and the exhibition of rich grace in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the great and precious promises, a no less complete answer to the latter.

2. WITH respect to the use of a form, there is a great difference between singing in public worship, and the other two things mentioned in the objection, namely, prayer and preaching: As to preaching, there is, perhaps, no denomination of Christians among whom it is restricted to a set form of words. And as to any servile use of forms that still prevails in the public prayers of any of the reformed churches, it is, undoubtedly, to be reckoned among their corruptions; being a part of the Antichristian leaven which Protestants ought to purge out. The reason is, that there is not a single precept or example in the word of God, to warrant it. That word, which is our only rule, says nothing at all of our praying in words which other men have prescribed to us; nor of the Head of the Church having vested any set of men with a right of prescribing such words. We have plenty of examples in scripture of social prayer; in which one must have always spoken as the mouth of the rest; but there is not the least intimation, that a prescribed form of words was used in any of these instances. The scripture abounds with exhortations, directions, and promises concerning prayer: but we have not a hint of the use or necessity of set forms. It must be something else, therefore, than a single concern to follow the rule of the divine word, that has induced any church to admit such forms. But we have many portions of scripture expressly designed to be used as forms of psalmody; and divinely approved examples of the church's use of them accordingly; nay, there is not a single scripture example of singing in social or public worship, in which it can be proved that any other words were used than those of the inspired songs. Of two ways of religious worship, when one is warranted by plain scripture examples, and the other by none at

all, a serious Christian, one should think, need not be at any loss to determine which is to be followed.*

3. THE truth is, our opponents do not mean to set aside forms of words in singing; as, indeed, there can be no such thing as public singing without some form of words. They mean only an exchange of forms: the inspired songs, or those versions of them, which are the most literal, faithful, and unaffected representations of the original text, must, it seems, be laid aside; that loose imitations (translations not being proposed or intended) of the sacred songs, or what men have composed, according to their notions of elegance or just arrangement, may be introduced. And these forms of human composition must first be only allowed or recommended, till the people be somehow inured to them; and so at last prepared to bear an appointment or imposition of them by ecclesiastical authority.† When once the public mind is found to acquiesce in human forms of praise, the way will be prepared for human prescribed forms of prayer; the principle of adding to, or improving upon the divine institutions being the same in both cases. Thus one human invention was added to another, till the Antichristian system of superstition and idolatry was completed, under which the Christian world groaned, for so many centuries.

* Those who plead for the use of set forms of prayer in public worship, attempt to draw an argument from the use of such forms in singing. But it is certain, there is a specifick difference between prayer and singing. For though our singing ought always to be accompanied with inward prayer; yet the matter sung is as often in a doctrinal, historical, or hortatory form, as in that which is proper for prayer. Public singing is rather a profession of joint concurrence in the matter sung, as a subject of instructive and believing meditation, than what is, properly speaking, prayer. Hence we read of teaching and admonishing one another, but never of praying, in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Hence our ancestors, the Presbyterians in Britain, used to complain of the church of England, because, in some of their cathedrals, they sung their prayers. It may be further observed here, that it seems to be no small presumption against the use of set forms of prayer in public worship, that those parts of scripture which have the appearance of such forms, are appropriated to another use, namely, that of singing.

† “Error, (says Mr. Hog of Carnock, in one of his pieces published about the time that professor Simson broached his heresies,) error is modest in its first approaches, but afterwards it speaks more resolutely, according to the entertainment it finds.”

OBSERVATION III. *The inspired forms of Psalmody were given to the church to be sung in her public and solemn worship till the end of the world.* It may safely be laid down as a maxim, That whatever form of worship God hath appointed, ought to be observed till the end of time ; unless he himself declare that it is only of a temporary nature, or that he is pleased at a certain period to abrogate it. It is certain, that he once appointed his church to sing his praise in the words of David and of Asaph: and where have we any intimation of his will that the church should cease to do so, before the end of the world ? It is true, those ceremonial institutions which were shadows of Christ as not yet come, such as, the legal sacrifices, purifications, the observation of meats and days, were abrogated when he was actually come ; and, likewise, whatever other ordinances served to keep up the partition wall between the Jews and Gentiles. But the singing of the inspired Psalms was no typical service ; and so far are they from belonging to the partition wall between the Jews and Gentiles, that the Gentiles are therein often invited to join with the church in the divine praises : As in the sixty seventh Psalm, *Let the people praise thee, O God ; let all the people praise thee : O let the nations be glad and sing for joy.* And in another place, *Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth.* While the Psalms are sung in the public assemblies of the church, David, Asaph, and the other penmen, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, still continue to celebrate the praises of God in the church ; as they sometimes intimate they were to do to the end of time. *I will sing,* says one of them, *the mercies of the Lord for ever.* *I will bless thy name,* says another of them, *for ever and ever.* Again, *I will make thy name be remembered through all generations.*

OBJECTION. ‘ The Jewish system of Psalmody was exactly suited to the dispensation under which that people were placed ; and many of them’ [of the Psalms belonging to that system] ‘ have such express reference to the peculiarities of the Jewish worship—have those ordinances of it which the apostle calls *worldly, weak, poor, &c.* so interwoven with their subject matter, that they cannot universally suit the gospel-dispensation,

which is so widely different from the Jewish, and under which these ordinances are entirely abolished.”*

ANSWER I. We allow that the Psalms were well suited to the state of the church under the Old Testament dispensation. But if by suitability the objector means (what he undoubtedly ought to mean) the fitness or tendency of the Psalms to promote the spiritual edification of church-members, or to convey the knowledge of gospel-truths; for there never was nor will be any real edification but in proportion to the attainment of the saving knowledge of the gospel; if this be what the objector means by suitability, then it will not be difficult to shew that the Psalms are not less, but rather more suitable to the state of the church under the New Testament dispensation, than they were to the state of it under the old. Suppose a person to have passed his whole life without ever seeing the sun; the light of his days having been only such as we have before the sun-rising, or after sun-setting. Suppose him, however, to have heard such accounts of the sun, as gave him some notion of the figure, motion, and beneficial influence of that majestic luminary. The following remarkable text, in the fourth of Malachi, might be intelligible and instructive to such a person: *Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.* And yet it may well be said, it would be still more suitable to the case of a person who had actually beheld the sun shining in his strength. Again, when the book of Job was written, it could not be unsuitable to any real knowledge of the earth which men had then attained, (and not the less suitable for being contrary to their prejudices,) to be informed, that *God hangeth the earth upon nothing.*† And yet there can be no impropriety in saying, that it is more suitable to the present state of human knowledge, when philosophy and the discoveries of navigation, have placed the truth concerning the spherical figure of the earth in such a clear and illustrious point of view. Thus many passages in the book of Psalms, which might be very obscure to an Old Testament believer, have such abundant light poured upon them by the New Testament revelations, that the weakest Christian can be at no loss about the meaning of them. When an Old Testament believer read, in the book of Psalms,

* A Sermon on Psalmody, Page 29.

† Job xxvi. 7.

of ONE who was to say unto God, *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not : lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me.*—Of ONE who was to have his hands and his feet pierced ; who was to be brought to the dust of death ; and yet who was to see no corruption ; and who was to be a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec ; and to whom the Lord would say, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool :* further, when he should read such evangelical expressions as these ; *I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only ; be surety to thy servant for good :* when an Old Testament believer of ordinary attainments read such expressions as these, it would require much instruction, much meditation, and many errands to the throne of grace, to bring him to any tolerable apprehension of the true meaning of them. Whereas now any serious Christian, acquainted with the New Testament, in reading the same passages, and in the diligent use of the same means, can more clearly discern both that meaning, and the admirable fitness of the words to express it. Thus the superior light of the New Testament dispensation, instead of rendering the use of the Psalms in the public worship of the church less suitable, makes it more so ; that light serving to disclose to our view the manifold wisdom of God contained in the words of the inspired songs. Surely if we know our privileges, and if our souls profit by them, we will enter, more easily and fully than Old Testament believers could ordinarily do, into the spirit of what the Psalmist declares concerning his faith and hope of salvation, concerning his godly sorrow for sin, concerning the conflict between faith and sense, between the flesh and the spirit, concerning the marks and evidences of saving grace, concerning the case of the church as a kingdom not of this world, but hated by it.*

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* Perhaps some may object to what is here advanced, That, if our understanding the Psalms better than church-members under the Old Testament, be a warrant for our singing them, the same reasoning might be made use of for our observation of the ceremonial law. It is answered, in the first place, that the writer is not here advancing an argument for singing the Psalms ; he is only answering an objection. He is far from thinking that our superior advantages for understanding the Psalms might be properly adduced as a proof that we ought to sing them ; but they are sufficient to show that the pretended obscurity of the Psalms ought not to deter us from doing so. And, in the second place, we have another and weightier reason against the practice of the ceremonial law than the obscurity of it,

2. THE ceremonial institutions were indeed *carual and worldly ordinances, weak and beggarly elements*, when abstracted from Christ, or as they were represented by the judaizing teachers, (against whom the apostle is disputing when he uses these expressions.) that is, when the practice of any of them was represented as necessary in order to the justification of a sinner before God, or when they were put in the place of, or somehow joined with, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the affair of justification. But, in this view, they are represented as beggarly elements, no less in the Psalms than in the epistles of Paul. To this purpose is that which we have in the fortieth psalm: *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required.* And again, in the fiftieth, *I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy fields. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* These ceremonial usages of the Old Testament dispensation may also be said to be beggarly elements, considered with regard to the obligation which the church was then under to the practice of them; and on account of the scanty measure of gospel-light which was, thereby, actually communicated to the bulk of church-members, compared with the abundant measure of that light which is enjoyed under the New Testament dispensation. This deficiency of light arose, partly, from the veil that was upon their hearts, through their natural bias towards the way of the broken covenant of works; partly, from the necessary condition of the church under that dispensation, while the Son of God was not yet actually incarnate. But it is utterly denied, that the consideration of the ceremonial institutions as types or metaphors, serving to shadow forth Christ and his benefits (which is the only consideration of these institutions which was ever warrantable in singing the psalms) is a poor or beggarly element, unfitable to the condition of the church under the New Testament. In this view, the usages of the ceremonial law are, like our Lord's parables, representations of earthly things used, not to veil or darken, but

namely, that it was the meaning of that practice, that Christ was not yet come, or that the partition-wall still remained between Jews and Gentiles; and therefore the retaining of that practice, at this time, is not only unnecessary, but pernicious, implying a total renunciation of the Christian religion. It is hoped that no one will make the absurd and blasphemous supposition, that this reason is applicable to the singing of the Psalms.

to illustrate spiritual and heavenly things That they actually do answer this purpose, is what a person needs not be told, who is diligent in the practical and believing use of his Bible. One instance may be given with respect to that most important gospel-truth, that the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ are of a vicarious and satisfactory nature. There is no argument for this truth by which the Socinians appear to be more confounded, than by that which is drawn from the plain declarations concerning the substitution of the Jewish sacrifices in the place of the offerer. There is no possibility of finding even so much as a plausible evasion of this argument, upon the principle, that these were designed by God to be shadows, and as exact representations, as earthly things could afford, of the use and end of Christ's death; a principle which it is the manifest scope of one whole book of the New Testament, the epistle to the Hebrews, to establish. So that they have no alternative but to deny that principle, or to admit the vicarious nature of Christ's death. For another instance, we may mention the very instructive and affecting manner in which the ceremonial law concerning the plague of leprosy sets forth the abominable nature of sin, the symptoms of its power and dominion, the total destruction that it brings upon those who remain under its dominion; and the manner in which the remedy revealed in the gospel is effectually applied.

It may further be observed, that, if the Psalms should not be sung on account of allusions to the sacrificial and other usages of the Old Testament, the same objection will be against the language of the New Testament; which is full of such allusions. This sort of language was quite familiar to the apostles, not because it was the language of the religion in which they had been educated: No, but for an infinitely better reason, namely, that the Holy Ghost judged it to be the fittest of all human languages for the purpose of revealing the glorious Object of our faith: *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour. Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh: and, having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil*

conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. It would be easy to multiply examples out of the New Testament, in which references to the peculiarities of the Jewish worship are as much interwoven, to use the objector's phrase, with the subject matter, as in any passages of the Psalms.*

OBJECTION. "With what propriety can church members now call upon one another to praise God with the harp, the psaltery, the timbrel, and dance;—and to blow the trumpet in the new moon; when at the same time, they mean not at all to do any such thing? Upon what principles can we intreat God to do good to Zion with this declaration in our mouths, that then he should be pleased with whole burnt-offerings and bullocks which the church should offer upon his altar? Under the Jewish dispensation, such offerings were proper—they were divine ordinances—and the pious worshippers not only expressed them in words, but intended and actually performed them; but no Christian believes he should present such offering, or, if he did, that they would be pleasing to God. Can we, consistently with truth, say in our songs of praise, that sparrows and swallows build by the altar of God, and that they are blessed who travel through the dry valley of Baca, dig wells in it, and collect the rain in pools, to supply themselves with drink, whilst they are coming from a distant part of Judea, to celebrate the annual festivals at Jerusalem. Whilst the Jewish œconomy lasted, this could be sung with truth: but now it cannot—these things exist no more. It must be very absurd, if not a kind of mockery, to approach the Most High with expressions in our mouths, to which we have either no meaning at all, or one

* "No allusions, metaphors, or similies, could be fitter for expressing and explaining the mysteries of the gospel, than the typical ordinances of the Old Testament, in which both the sign and the thing signified are of God, and fitted to each other by his wisdom. Accordingly, the scriptures use the Jewish ceremonies, not only to express the state and exercise of the church on earth, but even in describing the exercises of the saints in heaven. So that the objectors only declare their ignorance, when they pretend that the language of the New Testament is different from that of the Old; nothing being more evident to such as are acquainted with both, than that they are precisely the same. *We are the circumcision. He is a Jew that is one inwardly. Peace be to all that walk according to this rule, and on the Israel of God. Ye are an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.*" G.

very different from their obvious sense, and that which they were originally intended to convey."*

ANSWER. 1. It is often instructive to sing the sayings of others, though they may not be altogether applicable to our own circumstances. The words we sing, are often to be considered, not as ours, but as the words of the sacred writer, or of some other. Sometimes we sing the words of the church's enemies: *Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation: that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* Sometimes the words of the saints, declaring their great attainments, are in our mouths, though they may be far from being applicable to our present case; as when the Psalmist says, *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed. I understand more than the ancients.* These passages, on the principle of the objector, could not be sung with truth by church-members in general, even under the Old Testament, more than the passages which he specifies, can be sung with truth under the New. But surely we may with truth sing such passages as represent the language, the exercises, or attainments of others: The poetical style renders them proper to be sung: and to suppose that they afford no spiritual instruction (with which the Lord's people in all ages have found them to be fraught) is to betray gross ignorance of the things of God, and to cast a blasphemous reflection upon Him who gave them to us for our learning. †

2. It is a common figure of speech that makes use of an individual, or a particular, to represent a whole species or kind. *The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming:* that is, all the birds of these several kinds are led by instinct to do so. And often, by this figure, a particular thing is used as a representative of something else of a general nature, even in times and places wherein the thing so employed does not exist. Thus, when the merciful providence of God turns wars into peace, it may still be said, *He breaks the bow, and burns the chariot in the fire:* though every body knows that neither bows nor chariots are now made use of in war. Where a people enjoy the blessings of civil liberty, and of being governed by laws

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* A sermon on Psalmody, Pages 30, 31.

† Rom. xv. 4.

made by their own consent, they may be said to sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and little regard would be due to the frigid remark, that there was not a vine or fig-tree to be seen amongst them. To give only another example, because it bears a manifest analogy to one of the passages referred to in the objection, when a poetical writer discovers that fire and sublimity of genius which are supposed to be necessary to success in the composition of odes, it may be said,

“ He wakes to extacy the living lyre,”

Though it is well known he never handled or even saw such a musical instrument. Now, some of the psalms mentioned in the objection, may be considered as examples of this beautiful figure. The harp, the psaltery, the timbrel, and dance, represent that variety of talents, gifts, or graces which the Lord has bestowed on church-members, and which are all to be employed as so many means or instruments of shewing forth his praise. In like manner, the offerings and whole burnt-offerings which were made under the ceremonial law, should be considered as representatives of all other suitable professions of faith and obedience made by church-members. Thus whatever comfort and refreshment the Lord affords his people who are pilgrims on this earth, by his special providence or by the influence of his Spirit, is represented by the particular comfortable refreshment that some of the people of Israel had in going to attend on their annual solemnities, *who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools.* The truth is, this objection is much to the same purpose as if a person should say, when he reads the precept, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,* I am not concerned in this prohibition, for I have no ox that treadeth out corn. We are to guard against such manner of treating the scripture, lest we be found guilty of a grievous breach of the third commandment, by a profane trifling with his word.

3. If there is any force of reason in the objection, it militates against the singing of the Psalms, in the ordinary public worship of the Old Testament church, as well as in that of the New. If they could not with propriety sing the Psalms, unless where they had harps, psalteries, organs, and cymbals, or where sacrifices were offered; then they could not be sung in fami-

lies or synagogues, or any where but at Jerusalem; for it was in the temple alone, (at least from the time of David,) that God was to be worshipped with instrumental music or the offering of sacrifices. But, it seems, there were some of the Psalms, which neither the priests who officiated regularly in the temple, nor the inhabitants of Jerusalem or its environs, could sing with any propriety. Why? because they knew nothing (except, as we ourselves under the New Testament may know, by the testimony of others) of coming from distant parts of Judea to celebrate the annual festivals, of digging wells by the way, or of the joy which the pious travellers experienced when the showers of rain filled their wells. Thus, if it were a valid objection against singing such passages of the Psalms as those now alluded to, that we cannot sing them in any other than a historical and figurative sense, then they must have been as unsuitable to the greatest part of church-members under the Old Testament, as they are now.

BESIDES, if it be true which the objector alleges, namely, that any spiritual or evangelical sense, which is affixed to these words in singing them, is "one very different from their obvious sense, and from that which they were originally intended to convey;" if this be true, it is not conceivable how these passages could be calculated for the edification of the church under the Old Testament more than under the New: for it is certain, that nothing but spiritual and evangelical truth, could ever edify the church of God, or build up the members thereof, in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation: But, according to the objector, the words used by the Psalmist, in the passages alluded to, were not originally intended to express any such truths!!!

4. THE same rules are to be observed in the interpretation of the Psalms, as in the interpretation of other places of scripture. If the literal sense of a text be agreeable to the analogy of faith, or to the general strain of scripture doctrine, and to the scope and connexion of the place; then it is to be taken literally. But if the literal sense be contrary to the current of scripture doctrine, if it be trivial, affording no spiritual or practical instruction, if it be unsuitable to the scope and connexion of the place; then it is necessary to depart from the

literal sense; the passage must be taken figuratively. In this case, to insist upon the literal meaning is rather an attempt to burlesque the scripture, than a serious endeavour to come at its true meaning. Any person must be sensible of this, whenever he tries to take such expressions as the following in the literal sense: *Purge me with hyssop; Make the bones which thou hast broken rejoice; The mountains shall bring forth peace; Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters; Let the dead bury their dead; Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* We are no less in danger of error by taking the figurative parts of scripture literally, than by taking the literal figuratively, as is manifest in the case of the Anthropomorphites, the Millenarians, the Papists, and many other heretical sects.* Nor does it follow that because a passage of scripture is figurative, therefore it is obscure: Figures, and especially metaphors, which abound in all languages, are often used by speakers or writers as the most proper means for bringing their readers or hearers to a clear and distinct apprehension of what they want to communicate: They answer this purpose, when they are exactly adapted to the subject, or to that part of it which they are brought to illustrate; when they are taken from common objects or occurrences, or from things with which we either are or ought to be well acquainted. To a person who has been accustomed to the daily reading of the scriptures, many of these figures must be so familiar, that he can be at no loss to understand them. For example, when he reads the hundred and fiftieth Psalm, in which men are called upon to praise the Lord with the

* The *Anthropomorphites* ascribed a human shape to God, because the scripture speaks of his eyes, ears, hands, &c. The *Millenarians*, understanding Revel. xx. 4, 5, 6. literally, maintain that, before the last day, a number of men, namely, saints and martyrs, will be raised from the dead; and that the whole church then upon earth, will enjoy uninterrupted prosperity, exempted from all affliction, and having our Saviour visibly among them, for a thousand years. The *Papists* pretend to ground their absurd doctrine of transubstantiation upon the literal sense of the words, *This is my body.* The *Quakers* pretend (though they are far from thinking the holy scripture to be the only rule of faith and practice) to ground their absurd opinion of the unlawfulness of oaths upon these words of James, *Swear not at all;* and their no less absurd opinion of the unlawfulness of defensive war, upon these words of our Saviour, *Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;* not heeding the true scope of these places, nor yet the analogy of faith, or the current doctrine of the scripture on the subjects spoken of.

Psaltery and harp, with the timbrel and dance, with stringed instruments and organs, and upon the high-sounding cymbals; he considers, first, that it is absurd to suppose that all men are here commanded to play upon musical instruments: secondly, that the use of instrumental music in religious worship was confined to the temple even under the Old Testament; and therefore was typical: and, thirdly, that the praise here meant is the duty of all reasonable creatures, in which they are all exhorted to join; and therefore it cannot be understood of any rites or modes of worship that are merely local and typical. He therefore concludes, that the exercise of praising which we are here called to, is no other than that of glorifying God with our bodies and spirits which are his: and that the Psalmist uses such an enumeration of particulars; such a vehemence of repetition, to signify that we should employ all the means that grace and providence afford us in celebrating his praise; that we should praise him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. He is also convinced, that there is the greatest propriety in the figurative expressions here used; in regard that all that was then known of the musical art amongst men, is employed to set forth the intenseness of that spiritual exercise of praise, which the glorious excellencies and works of our God call for from his creatures, and especially from his redeemed ones.* Such a person can be at no loss with respect to the meaning of the close of the fifty first Psalm: he sees clearly that *the offerings and whole burnt offerings of bullocks* with which the Lord is said to be pleased, cannot be understood merely of the outward rites; of which the Psalmist says in a foregoing verse, *Thou desirest not sacrifice; thou delightest not in burnt-offering*; together with many other passages to the same purpose. It must be plain to the serious enquirer, that what the Lord was well-pleased with was (that which is common to Old and New Testament believers) their bring the offering of Christ to God in the exercise of faith,

* Vos estis tuba, psalterium, cythara, tympanum, organum, et cymbala jubilationis bene sonantia, quia consonantia. Vos estis hæc omnia. Nihil vile, nihil transitorium, nihil hic ludicum, vel lubricum; et quia sapere secundum carnem mors est, omnis spiritus laudet Dominum. *Augustinus in locum.* That is, Ye are the trumpet, the psaltery, the harp, the organ and the cymbals of joy that are well sounding, because agreeing together: nothing mean, transitory, ludicrous or vain is meant here: and, since it is death to be carnally minded, let every one with his spirit praise the Lord.

and in obedience to his command; and, in that way, presenting themselves and their services, *the calves of their lips*, unto God. Such an enquirer will recollect, that believers are said to be *a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*; and that Christ is called *our altar* in the New Testament.* This is no arbitrary interpretation; no imposed meaning: but what we are naturally and necessarily led to by the words, taken in consistency with the context, and with the whole tenor of scripture; and to take the words of scripture any other way, is but to abuse them. Again, such a person when he sings these words in the third verse of the eighty fourth Psalm, *The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, &c.*†, will be naturally led to some such meditation as this: Christ saith to his disciples, Fear not: ye are of more value than many sparrows: Is it not my King and my God that supplies the wants of the sparrow and the swallow? and will he not much more satisfy that ardent desire of communion with himself, in his ordinances, which he hath created in my soul? To give another instance, a serious Christian can never be satisfied that no more is meant by the representation, in the same Psalm, of those *passing through the valley of Baca, and making a well, while the ram filleth the pools*, than merely the digging of a well, by a company of Israelites in their way to Jerusalem: First,

* Hosea xiv. 2. Heb. xiii. 10. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

† It is difficult to conceive how the sparrows and swallows would be suffered to build their nests *on or even*, (if the Psalmist's words would bear it) *by or near the altars*, where there was such a continual resort of people, and where the priests were daily officiating. This difficulty, and the distinctive point separating the words, *thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God*, from the foregoing part of the verse, lead us to agree with those interpreters who consider what is said of the sparrow and the swallow, as included in a parenthesis, and taking a supplement from the second verse; read thus, *My soul longeth; or my flesh and my heart crieth out for—thine altars, O Lord, &c.* Or, perhaps, the last part of the third verse may be simply considered as an abrupt exclamation; while the Psalmist is reflecting on the care of Providence towards the birds, directing them to what is suitable to their respective conditions, he is suddenly struck with a view of the Lord's special mercy, manifested in the ordinances of his grace; and cries out in an extacy of delight, *Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God*: thine altars, and the sweet communion with thee which I have enjoyed there, are more suitable to the case of my soul, than the cherishing warmth of the nest is to the tender young of the sparrow or swallow.

because this sense is jejune, and could afford no spiritual instruction, either under the Old or New Testament dispensation: Secondly, because the Holy Spirit speaks of this as a distinguishing privilege of the Lord's people. Thirdly, because the effect of the rain filling the pools is described in too magnificent terms to be understood of the effect of mere natural rain. *They go from strength to strength: every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.* Besides, even though we should understand the words of the special providence only, that was exercised about the Lord's people in attending on ordinances, they will still be as proper to be sung under the New Testament, as they were under the Old; and surely, if professed Christians were duly careful in giving a diligent attendance on the ordinances of the gospel, they could not be at any loss to enter into the spirit of these words. On the whole, it is apparent that the passages alluded to in the objection give no ground for this rash and unguarded assertion; "That some of the Psalms, in their plain and literal sense—the sense in which they were used under the Old Testament dispensation, are not suited to gospel-times."

"SOME of the Psalms," says the objector, not all; for he allows that "many of them so excellently express the exercises of a pious and devout heart, and so sublimely extol the Most High, without any reference to the peculiarities of that dispensation which is now abolished, that they contain matter proper to be sung to the end of the world."*

It is true, that some of the Psalms may be more suitable to the present case of a person, or people, than others. Some are more adapted to an afflicted condition; others to a prosperous one: Some may be called penitential, and others thanksgiving psalms. And persons are at liberty to fix on such of the psalms for their present use, as they judge to be most suitable to their circumstances, attainments, or frame of mind. But it does not follow from this, that there are some of the Psalms which it is warrantable, and others which it is unwarrantable, to sing under the New Testament. For it is warrantable to sing, as well as read, passages of scripture that may respect a situation or condition that is quite different from our own. While we are sen-

* A Sermon on Psalmody. Page 32.

sible of our small progress in the way of true godliness, as judging ourselves to have hardly, as yet, entered into it, we ought, notwithstanding this, to sing of the high attainments of the people of God recorded in scripture; giving him hearty thanks for all the kindness he has shown to any of Adam's family. Though we may, at present, be in a comfortable frame of spirit, it may be very profitable to sing the mournful strains of the Psalmist; that we may be prepared for a day of trouble, nothing being more dangerous than security; that when we meet with trials, we may be furnished with this necessary and comfortable preparation, even a knowledge that *no temptation hath taken us but that which is common to the Lord's people*. Though we should labour to attain a well-grounded assurance, that *the Lord hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ*; yet we are to sing of his vindictive justice, displayed in the punishment of the wicked, as well as of the riches of his grace and mercy to his own people. In singing, we are not only to express our grateful sense of all his benefits, but our cordial acquiescence in his just judgments: Thus, it is our duty to sing the Psalms that express the satisfaction that the saints have, in the contemplation of the glory of God as shining in the outpouring of his wrath upon his and their enemies; that is, upon such as obstinately and impenitently persist in their enmity against him and his people: though ignorant men, who consider not that the words which we sing, are the words of the Holy Ghost, and not our own, mistake and reproach the exercise, as if we were therein cursing our personal enemies; and as if the Holy Spirit would ever dictate songs for the use of the church, whether under the Old or New Testament, breathing a spirit of revenge: a sort of songs which ought to be ascribed to *him who was a murderer from the beginning*.

FURTHER, as it cannot be pretended that the distinction of the Psalms into such as may, and such as may not warrantably be sung under the New Testament is to be found in the Bible; so the reasons offered in support of it are vain and frivolous. That which is mostly insisted on, namely, that it is improper to sing the Psalms which abound with references to the ceremonial usages of the Old Testament, would, indeed have some weight, if alluding to these usages were the same thing with practising them; or if it were as bad a thing to make use of a thief in a

similitude or metaphor, as to be one: But the truth is, metaphors and comparisons are often used for illustrations, and it makes no difference what objects they are taken from, provided they serve that purpose. Thus our Lord compares his tender concern for Jerusalem to *a hen gathering her chickens under her wings*; and to express the suddenness of his coming, he says, *Behold, I come as a thief in the night*. It is shameful for a member of the New Testament church to complain of the allusions in the Psalms to the ceremonial usages as rendering them obscure; since this obscurity must necessarily have been far greater under the Old Testament. Even the ceremonial law ought, in some respects, to be as familiar to us, and better understood by us, than it was by the Jews; *Whatsoever was written aforetimes was written for our learning, that we through faith and patience of the scriptures might have hope*.

AFTER all, our opponents are far from being explicit in this matter. Error always loves to involve itself in ambiguous and indeterminate expression. We cannot certainly know from all that these men have spoken or written on the subject, whether or not they mean *absolutely* to condemn the singing of some of the Psalms in the public worship of the New Testament church as sinful; nor have they so much as given us an *expurgatory index* of the condemned Psalms. Such an index, upon their hypothesis, is exceedingly necessary: for if the singing of some of the Psalms be a mere peculiarity of the Old Testament dispensation, like the offering of sacrifices, or the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, then, to be sure, we have much need to be well apprized which are the abrogated Psalms, and which we ought to beware of singing. It is true, the Jewish converts were borne with for a while in their attachment to some of their old ceremonies. But it does not appear that this indulgence was continued to any after the canon of scripture was closed. So that if the singing of any of the Old Testament songs be mere Judaism, it must now be a dangerous, nay, a pernicious custom.

THE singing of the scripture songs a pernicious custom! So the church of Rome used to account the common practice of reading the holy scriptures.

BEFORE we quit this proposition, we may add,

A FOURTH observation, which is, *That as verse translations are necessary for the use of our churches in their public and solemn worship; so those translations ought to be preferred, that most happily and exactly represent both the matter and form of the scripture-songs.* Men may use whatever freedoms they judge proper with other books written in foreign languages, in order to adapt them to the taste or to the use of the people into whose language they translate them. But such freedoms are altogether illicit in translating the holy scriptures. “The original text,” to use the words of an old Puritan, Mr. John Canne, to whom the lovers of the Bible are much indebted for his judicious marginal references, “ought to be translated, as much as possible, even word for word, without departing from the letter of scripture in the least. For it is necessary to preserve the letter entire, how inconvenient, yea, how absurd soever and harsh it may seem to men’s carnal reason: *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men.* The scripture metaphors must not be omitted, nor mis-translated one for another. Many words of scripture which to some may seem unfruitful, and afford not much matter in the letter, yet, according to *the manifold wisdom of God*, have an excellent meaning of the Spirit in them. The original particles are to be minded, and special notice taken of them, as a thing of great concernment to shew the connexion of the text and context.”

THESE are the principles, upon which every translation of the sacred writings ought to be formed. A translation of the holy scriptures is to be valued in proportion as it represents not merely the sense, but the very words and phrases of the original. Not that we are to have any religious regard to one language above another, or to any set of sounds or syllables; all such regard being grossly superstitious: but as we believe that the words of the sacred writings were dictated by the Holy Spirit; so we believe that these words, having been chosen by infinite wisdom, are the fittest and the best, whether they be considered in relation to the things taught, or in relation to those whom they were designed to teach. Hence it follows that, of two translations, both made by such as were duly qualified for the work, and sincerely studious of preserving the entire sense of the original; but the one free, purposely representing the sense only; the other literal; and, as much as possible, word

for word, the latter ought, without hesitation, to be chosen. And that for two reasons. First, because the latter takes the only proper way to preserve the whole sense of the original; And, secondly, because the latter method of translating shews a becoming regard to the choice which the wisdom of God has made of words to express what he has been pleased to reveal to us. A verse translation of any of the poetical parts of the scripture ought to be formed upon the same principles: None of the original words ought to be neglected; and there ought to be very few supplements; and these only such as are plainly and necessarily implied in the original words. Such a verse translation will give us the scripture songs entire; the same beginning and ending; the same order of sentences, and of members of sentences, as in the sacred original. It is not the business of the translator to think how he himself would choose to express what he takes to be the sense of the Psalmist; or how it may be accommodated to men's supposed refinement of taste, or even to the state of the church under the New Testament dispensation. His only concern ought to be that each word in the original may have an exactly corresponding word or phrase in his translation; its relation to the words going before and following being the same in both. Such a translation will give us,—*not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.* We do not say, that we have, or expect, an absolutely perfect or faultless translation; but that the verse translation which adheres the most closely to the principles now laid down, is to be preferred; as giving us not only the matter, but the words of the Holy Spirit.

OBJECTION, “Still the form is merely human, unless we suppose the translator was divinely inspired, when he versified the Psalms, and that the Holy Spirit dictated to him the very phrases and measure of his verse.”*

ANSWER. The esteem of a translation of the scripture songs according to the degree in which it corresponds, not only in sense, but in words and phrases, with the original, is a very different thing from pretending that it was made by immediate divine inspiration: its exactness being the fruit of learning, of

much application to the study of the holy scriptures, together with the aids which the Lord ordinarily affords his people in whatever work he calls them to. What the objector means by the form, he does not precisely determine; but one should think, that the words and phrases, the metaphors and allusions, together with the order and relation in which they stand to one another, belong to the form of any composition in prose or verse: and these, in the translation of the scripture songs, as well as in the original, so far as they exactly correspond with one another, are such as were divinely chosen; and therefore he that calls them merely human, cannot be free from the guilt of speaking reproachfully of the divine word. There are some purposes which the original text alone can fully answer; such as, those of examining and judging translations, of vindicating the true reading or the true sense against the exceptions of adversaries, of correcting the mistakes of transcribers, and, in fine, of exhibiting that revelation which God hath given us in its full perfection. But still it remains a truth, that so far as the words of any translation are exactly answerable to those of the sacred original; not only the matter, but the form is divine; the words are as much the words of the Holy Ghost, as the Hebrew or Greek words; and are as proper *for our learning, that we, through faith and patience of the scripture, might have hope.* As to the versification, it is only a circumstance used for the conveniency of singing; and by no means incompatible with a due care to retain the words of the Holy Ghost, or the form as now described. Take the first Psalm in the version authorised by the church of Scotland for an example. The first line of that version is a more adequate representation of the emphasis of the two first words of the original; it is a more strictly literal translation of them, than that which we have in prose. Whatever faults may be charged upon that translation, they are not such as arise from a designed neglect of the phraseology of the sacred original: a religious regard to the principles now laid down is manifest through the whole of it.

OBJECTION. Is it not an ordinary custom with ministers and private Christians, in selecting a passage to be sung on any occasion, to take so many verses out of one or two Psalms, as they judge proper? Is not this much the same with what Dr. Watts has done in putting together such parts of a Psalm

as belonged to the same subject, and forming a plain hymn out of them? In this case, the matter is divine, though the form be human.

ANSWER. There is a great difference between a minister or private Christian choosing a portion for divine worship out of the inspired songs, and his choosing one out of such compositions as those of Dr. Watts.* In the former case, he has the whole of the scripture songs before him, in a version which adheres closely to the original; and out of these he may choose what he judges most suitable to the occasion, according to what he takes to be the real meaning of the Holy Spirit. But, in the latter case, he has not the Psalms or scripture-songs themselves, but only the views or notions which the doctor had of them, expressed in his own puerile way. Further, when a minister or private Christian singles out two or three verses of a Psalm for the present occasion, he does not mean to lay down any rule for the direction of other ministers or private Christians on future occasions: but when such a composition as that of Dr. Watts is used in public worship, a rule is there laid down, that church-members are to sing such verses of a Psalm, in such order and connexion, in such a sense and meaning, as the Doctor has prescribed.

WITH regard to the distinction between matter and form, it may be said of the Westminster-Confession with as much propriety, as of any hymns of human composure, that the matter of it is divine; because it is a plain declaration of scripture truths. But when we exactly recite a passage of scripture both the matter and form of what is recited is divine: it makes no difference in what language it be recited. And so far as a verse translator gives us the words and phrases, in the same order and relation which they stand in to one another in the original language, so far his translation retains this form.

D 2.

* "If the Scripture songs were to be newly translated by a person who was skilled in them enough to admire them and to discern their excellencies, something decent might be expected from him; but a person who is an enemy to the Scripture songs, and who has vilified them so much as Dr. Watts, could not be expected to render them otherwise than very wretchedly, which he has done accordingly, in consistency with his own exceptions against them." C.

It is observable, that those who are against ascertaining or declaring the particular doctrines of the Bible, in opposition to the errors and corruptions of the times, in any confession of faith, or public testimony, for divine truth, have it always in their mouth, That the Bible is their testimony; and that they will not subscribe to any human compositions, or to any words but the words of scripture. They have been often told that the grossest heretic will do the same: and that without such an adherence to specified articles of truth, we make no suitable appearance on the side of it, against the artifices of its adversaries, nor can the honest lovers of *sound doctrine* know whether we are for them or against them. But they heed no such expostulations: They are, no doubt, men of more moderation than to profess adherence to points of doctrine, which a great many wise and good men could never understand or admit. For their part, they think it sufficient to profess, as all good Christians do, to have a reverence for the Bible. One should expect that these moderate gentlemen would have some zeal for one thing at least; that is, the purity and excellency of the letter of the scriptures. But here we are utterly disappointed; for no sooner do they hear, that some celebrated Doctors have discovered that the Hebrew vowel-points (according to which that language has been usually read, and all the translations in use among Protestants have been formed) were the invention of the *Masoreth*, some Jews who either understood not, or wanted to corrupt the Old Testament; that the received reading of the Hebrew scriptures abounds with errors; that the Socinians are now found to have been in the right, when they held the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New to be irreparably corrupted; and further, that the Psalms of the Old Testament are but Jewish Psalms, that ought not to be sung in the Christian church without a great many alterations and accommodations to our superior light; that David, who is reckoned the author of most of them, was no estimable character; particularly, that he was a man of a very rancorous disposition, not having attained the mild and benevolent spirit of the gospel.* No sooner do our modern Latitudinarian

* "The Psalmist was so far from cursing his enemies that he prayed for them. *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into my own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother. I bowed down heavily,*

Christians hear these opinions, than they imbibe them as greedily, as if there was not a wise or good man in the world that rejected them. In vain are they told, that such opinions tend to discredit the letter of the scriptures, for which they used to profess so great a veneration : that they tend to render the sense of Scripture quite indeterminate, a mere thing of wax. The enemies to creeds and confessions look upon these things as promising signs of the success of their scheme : for if the letter of scripture be not authentic, then to be sure, there can be no ascertaining of particular articles of revealed truth ; as in a testimony or confession of faith : and men will vary the letter, as they used formerly to vary the the meaning, according to any reverie that suits their fancy.

The Third Proposition.

That the Scripture-songs are the only forms of Psalmody which ought to be used in the public and solemn worship of the church of Christ.

THE first argument we shall offer in support of this proposition arises from the consideration, that the inspired songs are forms of psalmody which God appointed to be used in the public and solemn worship of his church : This principle being evident from what was advanced on the former proposition concerning their being called *Psalms, hymns, or songs*, concerning the direction of them to the chief musician, to be used in the public praises of the temple, and concerning the divinely recorded and approved example of the Old Testament church. We have also seen that this appointment was no peculiarity of the Jewish church ; no temporary usage ; but is to continue unto the end of the world. We now proceed a step further ; and assert, that the *inspired songs alone* are appointed to this use ; there being nothing in the precepts or examples of the scriptures, from which it can be inferred, that the Lord Christ ever appointed any other than the inspired songs,

as one that mourneth for his mother, Psalm xxxv. 13, 14. Those who see nothing in the Psalm, but David and his history, passions and circumstances, are strangers to the sense of the Holy Spirit in them : Though those who, in our days, depreciate the Psalms appear sometimes to be as great strangers to the character of David, as to the mind of the Holy Ghost." C.

to be used in the public and solemn worship of his church. We argue here from the silence of scripture with regard to the use of other songs in public worship. And surely there is much truth in that saying of Luther, That a Christian should account it a sufficient confutation of any erroneous doctrine, to say, That there is no such thing in the Bible. To them that regard the holy Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice; and reject all ways or means of worshipping God that are not appointed in his word, it will be of no avail to say that the practice of introducing hymns of human composition into the worship of God, is, in the judgment of many wise and good men, rational, useful, and suitable to the attainments of the church under the New Testament; or to use ever so much lively and pathetic declamation to that purpose; while the principal recommendation, a word of divine appointment, is wanting. It should first be established, either by the express words of scripture, or by necessary consequences arising from them, that such an usage is, indeed, a divine ordinance; and then Christians may be excited to receive and observe it by rational considerations, of the usefulness and suitability of it. It is true, there are none of our Lord's ordinances, nor any properly belonging to them, but what has some use, or end worthy of the glorious Institutor, nor can they be rightly observed without a single regard to that use or end; but then we must have the authority of his word both for the usage itself, and for the primary use and end of it. Secondary rational considerations of the advantages that attend it may follow. But to employ these, in the first place, is a method that may be and indeed commonly is taken to justify superstitious or even idolatrous practices.

EXCEPTION I. Though it should be allowed, that there are some Psalms or songs which God hath appointed us to sing: yet we hope, he will regard with acceptance, those who sing other songs agreeable to the scripture, and calculated to excite religious and devout affections. It is the practice of eminently pious people.

ANSWER. It is, no doubt, a very hard chapter in the book of providence, that there should be such important differences among many who, we believe, are equally dear to the Lord Christ. But it is at our peril, if we put the most eminent saint,

in the world in Christ's place, or make men's opinions the rule of our faith or practice. Besides, what is an unallowed failing in one, may, and, it is to be feared, often does prove a fatal snare to another, whose state and circumstances are different. It is a pernicious notion, that because such a good man is chargeable with a particular evil absolutely considered; therefore, persisting in the same evil, is no more dangerous to another, whose light, convictions, profession, or other attainments, have been very different.

WITH regard to the exception it is to be observed, that since the Lord has given us so many scripture songs which he hath appointed to be used in our public praises, if we thrust aside these songs, were it ever so little, from the station which the Lord's appointment hath assigned them, we shall be chargeable with trampling upon his legislative authority. The Object of our worship is one, and we are to offer him only one sort of worship, namely, that which he hath appointed in his word. The Papists are somewhat consistent in using two sorts of hymns in their public worship; because they have two sorts of religious worship; their *Latria*, or the highest kind which they give to the Most High God; and their *Doulia*, an inferior kind, which they suppose to be due to saints and angels, and to which their own composures may be suitable enough. Such a plan may likewise tally very well with the way of the Arians and Socinians, who not only worship the Supreme Deity, but also a personage whom they look upon only as a very exalted creature. But we profess to worship none but him *whose name alone is Jehovah, the most high over all the earth.*

EXCEPTION II. But may not the general command *teach and admonish one another in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*, warrant a person who has a talent for poetry to compose hymns for the use of our worshipping assemblies?

ANSWER. No more than the general command to teach and admonish one another, will warrant a person who has a talent for speaking, to take upon him to preach, in the Methodist way of audaciously trampling upon the order of Christ's house. Surely the Master of the house will come shortly, and call his professed servants to an account as to the regard they have paid to the order of the house: Surely he will reckon with them as to

many of his commands, which they have treated with contempt under the names of mere externals, circumstantials, matters of doubtful disputation, and the like: he will reckon with them about the whole form of the house, about the outgoings and incomings of it, about all the ordinances of it*. But with regard to the Methodist, though, in assuming the character of a preacher, he is chargeable with running without being regularly called, and has ground to fear that he will have nothing to answer, when the Lord puts this question to him, *Who required this at your hands?* Yet he might have used his knowledge, if he has any, and his utterance, to the edification of his fellow Christians, without going out of his own sphere. In like manner, poetical genius may be otherwise employed than in basely attempting to corrupt the worship of God. No person, at least no Christian, that reads Mr. Pope's Messiah, or Mr. Addison's hymn beginning with these words, *When all thy mercies &c.* but heartily wishes that our language were enriched with many compositions of the same kind. The brightest genius cannot be better employed than in assisting the private meditations of Christians: Besides, those that have acquired a true taste for the beauties of the sacred writings, and a critical knowledge of the Hebrew language, might lay out their talents to good advantage, in giving us close and correct translations of the scripture songs in tolerably smooth verse, avoiding the paraphrastic and still more the imitative manner; using no expressions, no metaphors, no method, but what they clearly discern according to all strictness of grammatical and analytical accuracy, to be the expressions, the metaphors, the method of the Holy Spirit. Milton has given us a specimen of this kind in his translations of some of the Psalms.

EXCEPTION III. "In the fourteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle mentions, among the spiritual gifts of the Corinthians, that of dictating a psalm to be sung in public worship; (compare verses 15 and 26.) Now if Christians should sing no compositions in the worship of God, but those contained in the book of Psalms used by the Jews, there could be no need, nay, there could be no room for a spiritual gift, i. e. extraordinary inspiration, to enable them to propose a psalm to be sung in divine worship; for, upon this supposition,

* Ezck. xliii. 10, 11.

every composition they should use, was written for them long before. But it is evident, that there was, in the first age of Christianity, such a gift, and various Christians were divinely inspired to utter a psalm in the public assembly."*

ANSWER. As to this gift of dictating new Psalms, no regard is due to any inference that may be drawn from it, till the reality of it be proved, either by scripture or by credible human testimony. As to the latter sort of evidence, namely, that of human history, it may be considered in another place: at present we observe, that it is a principle which we have constantly maintained in our controversies with the church of Rome; nay, it is as, in a manner, the ground work of the glorious reformation from Popery, That no examples of the practice, of the church handed down in human histories or traditions, is a warrant for any usage in the worship of God, which is not authorised by the precepts or approved examples of scripture. This has been demonstrated abundantly by our writers against the Popish errors. Indeed, to deny that the Scripture is the *only* rule, is, in effect, to deny that it is any rule at all; for the moment we begin to make any thing a rule of our faith or practice, besides the scripture, we turn aside from it: Nothing that says less than the Scripture can be our rule; for, since there is nothing superfluous or unnecessary in the scripture, what says less must be inadequate: Nothing that says more can be our rule; for the overplus is either necessary or unnecessary. If it be unnecessary, it is utterly to be rejected as endless, superstitious, and inconsistent with the nature of a rule. If it be necessary, then the scripture is no proper rule at all; for though we should attain conformity to it, we would still want what is necessary; and no man of common sense would use that as a rule for measuring a yard, which wanted several inches necessary to make a yard. The scripture is abundant in asserting itself to be the only rule, to which nothing is to be added, and from which nothing is to be taken. Let us only consult the following places Deut. iv. 2. and v. 32. and xii. 32. Proverbs xxx. 5, 6. Gal. i. 8. Revel. xxii. 18, 19. and a few other places, which direct us to the scripture as the only rule of faith and obedience. Deut. xvii. 18, 19. IIa. viii. 20. Luke xvii. 29. Acts xxiv. 14. I Corinth. iv. 6.

SETTING aside, therefore, human authority, let us consider whether the passage referred to in the exception affords any ground for asserting that, in the apostolic age, other compositions than the inspired songs were used in the public praises of the church. The words of the apostle are these: *How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.* Concerning these words we offer the following observations: 1. Supposing the objector's view of these words to be right, which is, that *to have a Psalm* signifies *to have the gift of dictating one*, and that all the particulars here specified, are to be taken for extraordinary gifts; yet his consequence, namely, that other forms of Psalmody than those we have in scripture, ought to be used in the ordinary public worship of the New Testament church, may be justly denied: because we cannot reason from what is extraordinary, and from what, like the gift of tongues, was only of a temporary nature, to what is the ordinary duty of the church of Christ to the end of time. Besides, we cannot reason from the use of Psalms, which, upon the objector's hypothesis, must have been, both as to matter and to form, inspired Psalms, to the use of these which he must allow, as to form at least, to be uninspired. The objector's view of the words should rather lead us to continue in the use of those Psalms which we know are, both as to matter and form, inspired. 2. It is far from being clear, that *to have a psalm* signifies *to dictate one that had never been heard of before*. The apostle's expression is evidently susceptible of another interpretation; namely, that of proposing or making a proper selection and application of a Psalm; in which a very valuable spiritual gift might be exercised. It is no sufficient objection to this view of the words, that it does not imply extraordinary inspiration; for the apostle mentions several exercises that do not, in themselves, imply it, nobody will say that for a member of the Christian Church to have *a doctrine*, or to have *an interpretation*, extraordinary or immediate inspiration is necessary. These are of ordinary and standing use in the church; as well as the gift of making a proper choice of a Psalm for the use of a worshipping assembly. Besides, a person might be led by an extraordinary impulse in fixing on a particular Psalm, exactly adapted to the occasion, as well as in dictating a new one: and even upon the objector's hypothesis, there is nothing extraordinary

in the matter of either exercise ; but only in the sudden and surprising manner in which the gift was attained or exercised. Nor is, there any thing in the scope of the apostle in this place, which obligeth us to relinquish the interpretation now mentioned, and to admit that of the objector ; because the disorder which the apostle reproveth would be the same, whether old or new Psalms were brought forth. And surely the expression itself, taken abstractly, is not equivalent to that of *dictating new Psalms* ; and therefore must be very insufficient to be a ground upon which to build the supposition of the exercise of an extraordinary gift in the apostolic age, of which there is no mention in any other part of scripture. 3. The objector is by no means happy in seeking a warrant for a particular mode of worship, in a place of scripture that sets before us the disorderly proceedings of the Corinthian church, not that we may imitate them, but that we may beware of them. Even though the apostle had said that some of the Corinthians had dictated new Psalms, it might be supposed, agreeably enough to the scope of the apostle, that this was one of the abuses of their spiritual gifts ; for it is plain from his reproofs, that these gifts were liable to be abused : They might abuse that extraordinary knowledge and utterance which the Lord had bestowed on them, by dictating psalms, as well as by praying in an unknown tongue, or by interrupting those that spoke, with a confusion of voices. The spiritual gifts were of the Holy Ghost ; but the abuses were wholly of themselves. Indeed, when the apostle says, *I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also*, he seems to intimate, that they abused their gifts in singing, as well as in praying or prophesying ; their singing, being perhaps in an unknown tongue, or some how such as the people could not join in to their edification.*

THE truth is, that we are not informed in this text, what particular Psalms ought to be used in publick worship : only we are here admonished to guard against whatever tends to disorder.

E

* ONE of the Commentators in Pool's Synopsis gives this explication of two words here used by the apostles. *Spiritus* hic ipsum animum sive affectum orantis aut psalantis ; *intellectus*, autem, orationem intelligibilem, significat ; that is, *The Spirit* signifies the mind or affection of him that prays or sings ; but *the understanding* signifies a manner of speaking that is intelligible to others.

der and multiformity therein. That it is not without reason the introduction of hymns of human compofure has been complained of, as having fuch a tendency, may appear afterwards. We now proceed to

THE Second Argument; which is taken from the fulnefs and fufficiency of the fcripture-fyftem of Pfalmody. This is a natural conclufion from the infinite wifdom of its divine Author. All the cafes and circumftances of his people from the beginning to the end of the world, are ever prefent to his view; and his love to them being equal to his knowledge, we may affure ourfelves, that (fince he has been graciously pleafed to give them a fyftem of fongs, which, as hath been fhown in illustrating the fecond propofition, is to be ufed in his worfhip, and to encourage them *all the days of the years of their p lgrimage*) it will be fuch as they will find to be always fuitable to their cafe. Accordingly, there is no article of fcripture doctrine but what is more or lefs infifted upon in the fcripture fongs. There is no gracious experience or fpiritual exercife but what is therein exemplified. There is no crofs or comfort that we meet with, but we have words of the Holy Ghoft in the fcripture fongs that are proper to exprefs our fenfe of the Lord's hand in it; our fenfe of his wifdom, power, righteoufnefs, fovereignty, mercy, and faithfulnefs therein manifefted. The feelings of the heart both in a gracelefs and in a gracious ftate are here reprefented by him who alone knows the heart perfectly. As to true patriotifm, or concern for the welfare of the church, furely, the pureft fpirit of it breathes in the fcripture fongs: they teach us to make the cafe of the church our own; nay, *to prefer her welfare to our chief joy*.*

Now, if fuch be the fufficiency of the fcripture fongs; and if they were appointed, as we have fhewn in illustrating the fecond propofition, to be ufed in the publick praifes of the church unto the end of time; then the introduction of other forms of Pfalmody into the publick worfhip of the church, muft be unneceffary and inexcufable.

EXCEPTION. I. Does not this argument prove too much? For if there be fuch a fulnefs of matter in the fcripture fongs;

* Pfalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.

then we need no other compositions either in prose or verse, for our edification.

ANSWER. We are not speaking here of the scripture songs under the general view of their being means of edification ; but we speak of them only as constituting a system of Psalmody for the use of the church in her public worship. Compositions in prose or verse, wherein the truths of the gospel are clearly and judiciously illustrated, are *communications good to the use of edifying* : and there is no doubt, but when we are enjoined to *edify one another* with the words of Christ, we are enjoined to do so by writing, as well as by word of mouth. The truth is, the singing of psalms in public worship is but one of the various means which the Lord hath appointed for our edification : and therefore when we speak of the sufficiency of the scripture system of Psalmody, our meaning is, not that the system renders other means unnecessary, but that it is sufficient for the proper use of one mean, namely, that of singing in public worship : And the Lord's having given us such a variety of songs in his word, as is sufficient to answer all the various occasions of singing in public worship, is an intimation that no other should be used therein. If the Lord had given us only two or three songs, there might have been some pretence for the complaint of being confined to them ; but since those which he hath given us, are so numerous, and adapted by infinite wisdom to all the various conditions of the church and her members, there can be no colour of reason for the use of any other in public worship.

EXCEPTION. 2. " Those Scriptures" (passages of scripture) " which teach us to pray and praise ; and, indeed to do all our acts of religious worship in the name of the Lord Jesus, in such a manner as our Lord himself expressly tells his disciples they had never done before, most evidently shew that Christians should not *confine* themselves to the forms of worship used under the former dispensation ; but that in prayer, praise, &c. they should have according to the light and fulness of the gospel, a more express reference to the name, the person, and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, than is to be found in any discoveries or compositions under the law. If we *confine* ourselves to the Psalms of David, we shall exclude from our songs of

praise the distinguishing glories of the gospel, and still hold the veil upon the lovely face of the Redeemer : we shall ungratefully reject the light, and resolutely continue in the obscurity of the former dispensation : All this is evident from the following scriptures— *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, saith the Saviour, that will I do ; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. And again, Verily, verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive that your joy may be full. The time cometh when I shall no more speak to you in parables, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name.*

“ THESE are remarkable passages, declaring the duty and the privilege of Christians, beyond what was discovered to the Jews, or even to Christ’s own disciples before that time. *Hitherto, says he, ye have asked nothing in my name.* This was the case in the Jewish worship, and is so still.”*

ANSWER I. The objector’s expression about *confining ourselves to the Psalms of David*, seems to imply that all he contends for, is the liberty of singing some other scripture-songs than what we have in the collection of them entitled, The Book of Psalms. But this is by no means the case : for he tells us that “ the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, in which the apostle exhorted the Colossians to teach one another, were not only those which were then composed and in use in the Christian Church, but also those which from thefulness of the word of Christ dwelling in believers, they might be enabled from time to time to compose for their mutual edification, and the glory of God.” He also asserts that “ the gracious Saviour has provided and left in his word, and by the ordinary influences of his Holy Spirit, sufficient furniture of light, gifts, and graces, for all the parts of religious worship, without leaving a system or liturgy, in the precise words of which we should either pray, or praise, or preach.” Thus it is evidently the objector’s opinion, that we are no otherwise bound to the use of any scripture forms of words whatever in our public singing, than in prayer or preaching. Accordingly the compositions, which our opponents recommend to be used in public worship, are

* A Sermon on Psalmody, &c. Pages 27, 32, 15, 16.

not at all close or literal translations of any of the scripture songs: but rather a sort of original compositions of the authors, into which, as it suits their own plan, they deign, now and then, to introduce a detached expression or half-sentence from the scripture songs, the names of which are absurdly enough placed at the head of them. Our opponents have one hundred and fifty of the Psalms, and several other inspired songs, from which to make their choice: but they still prefer human compositions, as if they had lost a relish for the good and wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by his Spirit, gave all these songs to the church.

2. THE objector most unjustly represents the Old Testament-church as making no use of the name of Christ in their prayers or praises. If they made no use of that infinitely precious name, it was not for want of a revelation of it: for we are assured, in the tenth chapter of the Acts, and forty third verse, *That to him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth on him, shall receive remission of sins.* Surely the prophets bearing witness of Christ, necessarily implies in it their declaration of his name; and the Old Testament saints, whose faith undoubtedly corresponded with the testimony of the prophets, must have known and believed that they would receive the forgiveness of sins through his name; and that, through the same blessed name, their persons, prayers, praises, gracious thoughts, desires, resolutions, engagements, conflicts with sin, and aims at walking in the way of duty, should all be accepted. Accordingly, the prophets are very particular in declaring his name: See among other places, Isa. ix. 6. Jerem. xxiii. 6. Zechar. xii. 6. God's face which the saints under that dispensation sought continually, was just a clear manifestation of Christ's name. We find them expressly pleading upon his name. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Cause thy face to shine on thy sanctuary, for the Lord's sake. Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.* Christ is often called, *Redeemer, Saviour, and the Lord's Anointed One*, in the Old Testament;* which names are equivalent to *Jesus Christ*.

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* Isaiah xlv. 21, 22. and lix. 20. Psal. ii. 2. &c.

HAVING adduced these words of our Lord to his disciples, *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name*, the objector adds, "This was the case in the Jewish worship, and is so still with them." It was probably from inadvertence that this remark escaped the objector; not duly considering how many dangerous errors must be included in an opinion, that would lead us to form a judgment of the worship of the church of God under the Old Testament, from the ridiculous worship of the modern Jews. With respect to our Saviour's words, it is necessary to observe, that, in scripture, negative expressions are often to be understood comparatively: As when it is said, *By my name Jehovah was I not known to them. I will have mercy, and not sacrifice. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers.* The passage adduced by the objector may be understood in the same manner; it is as if our Saviour had said to the disciples, Ye have not asked largely, or with the full assurance of faith, as my name warrants you to ask. It is not so properly the condition of the Old Testament church, as the personal exercise and attainment of the disciples that our Lord is here speaking of. Our Lord's complaint of their having asked nothing in his name is often sadly applicable still to the personal case and exercise of Christians: they being straitened in themselves, notwithstanding the abundant freedom of access with boldness and confidence, that faith has in and through his name. The truth is, however small we suppose the light of the Old Testament church to have been, true believers under that dispensation, had a real and saving knowledge of the name of Christ, as that by which alone there could be any acceptable drawing near to God. This they were taught by the first promise, by all the prophets, by the ceremonial law, and particularly, by the mercy seat. Without admitting this, we must either suppose that they came to God in some other way than by Christ; or that they could come unto God by him without the knowledge of his name: and then we will necessarily be led into the opinion, of salvation being attainable by heathens without ever hearing of his name; an opinion that manifestly tends to subvert the Christian religion.

3. WE are to guard against measuring (as the objector seems to do) what is contained in the Old Testament scriptures by the

actual attainments of Old Testament church-members. For the gospel with all its distinguishing glories is as really, though not so clearly, contained in the Old Testament scriptures, as in the New. Paul declared, that the things which he said *were no other than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.*

4. WE ought to distinguish between the scriptures of the Old Testament taken by themselves or without the New Testament, and the same writings taken in connexion with the New Testament. Though the Old Testament scriptures, taken by themselves, may well be said to be far more obscure than those of the New; yet, through the abundant light reflected upon the Old Testament from the New, we may now discern the gospel of Christ as clearly and plainly in the one as in the other. Just as by the light of the sun we discern other objects full as clearly as the body of the sun itself. The veil was upon the law and the prophets before the coming of Christ, but he came and drew aside the veil, that we may behold his lovely face shewing itself in all the Old Testament scriptures.

5. THOUGH we maintain that the Psalms are calculated in the best manner, to express the praises of the glory of God, as shining in the face of Jesus Christ, even under the New Testament dispensation; yet it does not follow, that their sublimity rendered them unsuitable to the condition of church-members under the Old Testament: because the object of the church's praise is always to be spoken of in the highest degree: and therefore the same terms may be used in expressing our sense of his glorious excellencies, even when the particulars which are mentioned as grounds of praise, are different. Besides, they were to praise him not only for his attributes in general, for the works that he had done, or was then doing, but also for these works and discoveries of himself, which he had promised. Some of the expressions which we meet with in the Psalms appear, at first view, to have more relation to the Old Testament dispensation, as when the usages of the ceremonial law are alluded to: And other passages appear to be more adapted to the New Testament dispensation, as when the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are represented as past events; *They pierced my hands and my feet: Thou hast ascended on high, &c.*

But the truth is, they were adapted by their omniscient Author to the condition of his people in all succeeding ages and generations. It is not faith, but unbelief, or worldly wisdom, that represents the scripture songs as improper for the use of the militant church, in any period after the giving of them.

EXCEPTION 3. " Let us suppose a person who knew not what religion we professed, were to come into our worshipping assemblies, week after week, year after year, and hear our songs of praise: would he by them learn *the word of Christ* which the apostle enjoins us to teach, particularly in our praises? Or rather, would he not, from this part of our religious service, form the same opinion of us that he would of an assembly of worshipping Jews."*

ANSWER. 1. We have shewn already that the distinction between the Old and New Testament dispensation does not lie in the form of Psalmody; the Holy Spirit having given us one in the Old Testament designed for the use of the church till the end of the world. If the modern Jews, and other heretics, use the Psalms, as they do the other scriptures, in a false and blasphemous sense, we are not, therefore, to be deterred from using them in their true sense, and according to the mind of the Holy Spirit.

2. As to that part of the exception which respects the teaching of the word of Christ, though we are to receive instruction in singing as in prayer; yet singing and teaching, formally considered, are to be distinguished from one another.† Our singing supposes that we are already instructed in the first princi-

* A sermon on Psalmody. Page, 24.

† Agreeably to what is here said, the author of the Sermon on Psalmody observes, that reading and singing are distinct ordinances. " In singing praises," says he, " God is the immediate object, and the primary end is to celebrate his supreme glory and perfection, in himself, and in his works and ways; in reading, the primary end is instruction and edification." These words sufficiently answer the exception which is here under consideration. But all that the author has said about the distinction between singing and reading confits well enough with the truth of this proposition: That, if it be improper to sing those parts of scripture which the Lord gave to his church for the purpose of singing, it must be also improper to read

les of our holy religion: for we can never sing praises *with understanding*, unless we have some previous acquaintance with the grounds or subject of our praises. Though the apostle exorts Christians that were of some standing in the church, to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; he does not say that such singing is the proper way of beginning the instruction of a person who is grossly ignorant. The proposal, therefore, of teaching a stranger *the word of Christ* by public singing only, is absurd: since there are other means more suitable to his case. And, indeed, neither strangers, nor even such as are brought up amongst ourselves, can reasonably expect either to understand or attain the end of public praises, or of baptism and the Lord's supper, while catechising, family-worship and instruction, secret prayer, and secret reading the scriptures, are neglected. While persons allow themselves in the neglect of these private duties, they know neither what they hear, nor what they sing, in our public assemblies. While they thus evidence that they care not whether they bring forth fruit in God's vineyard or not, they have reason to fear that he is about to cut them down as cumberers of the ground.

EXCEPTION 4. It seems proper that a particular church should have new forms of psalmody expressly adapted to the dispensations of providence, as they occur. How can the scripture forms of Psalmody be sufficient in this respect?

ANSWER. It is not the design of a form of Psalmody to give a narration of particular events, which is the province of history; but rather to celebrate the praises of the divine power, wisdom, righteousness, mercy, and faithfulness, manifested in such events or providential dispensations. And there are no dispensations, prosperous or adverse, but we may find a form of words in some of the scripture songs, suitable to express our

them; for the obscurity, Judaism, &c. of the Psalms must hinder the edification of church-members in reading as well as in singing them. It is true, that reading and singing have, each of them, something peculiar to itself. But the objections against the public singing of the scripture songs, manifestly respect that which is common to both. For example, both should be accommodated to the capacities of church-members, and to the gospel dispensation. Sermon on Psalmody. Pages 35, 36.

sense of the Lord's doing therein; to express the admiration, reverence, or gratitude; the faith, hope, and love, which ought to be exercised on such an occasion.

To conclude what we have to offer on the sufficiency of the scripture songs as a system of Psalmody for public worship, we shall only say farther, that the more we consider the extent and variety of this system, we see the more clearly the ignorance or presumption of pretending to substitute another in its place, or even to find room for a supplement.

THE Third Argument for the exclusive use of the scripture songs in the public praises of the church, arises from the quality or superior excellence of those divine songs. God hath given the scripture songs, as we have seen, for this use or end, namely, to be the standing form of public Psalmody both under the Old and the New Testament. And since he has designed them to this end, we must conclude that they are the best adapted to it: for *God's work is perfect: nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it. He doeth all things well.* How presumptuous, then, is it for men to pretend that the scripture songs are more proper for being used in the worship of God, as altered by men, and accommodated to their taste, than as delivered to us by the Holy Spirit! "Let the writings of men contain ever so many valuable truths, still we are not ashamed to declare, that never man spake like God.*

FARTHER, no other forms of Psalmody can approve themselves to the spiritual taste of Christians, like the scripture songs. For the truths of God's word (though always sweet to the renewed taste) are like water, which is found to be sweeter when drunk immediately out of the fountain: There is an authority, a majesty, a spiritual savour, a generous richness in the words of the Holy Ghost, which it is in vain to expect in any other.

BESIDES, the words that the Holy Spirit hath put into our mouths for singing the divine praises, are the words upon which

* Declaration and Testimony by the Associate Presbytery of Pennsylvania, Part third, article sixth.

we have the best ground to expect the divine blessing; and to trust that they will prove a vehicle or mean of conveying the quickening and refreshing influences of the Holy Spirit to our souls. It consists with the experience of the Lord's people, that the Holy Spirit usually gives them the most sensible relief and effectual counsel and comfort, by bringing to remembrance, opening, and applying his own words. But what reason have we to expect that he will co-operate with men's words introduced into that place which he hath appointed his own words to occupy?

EXCEPTION. If the inimitable excellence of the scripture songs should hinder us from using any hymns of human composition in public worship, should not the same excellence in the discourses and forms of prayer recorded in scripture, oblige us to confine ourselves to these in preaching and prayer?

ANSWER. Besides what has been already offered concerning the Lord's peculiar appointment in the case of forms of Psalmody; we may observe, that the use of forms appears to be as inconsistent with the scriptural nature of preaching and prayer, as it is agreeable to that of singing in social worship. It is no way improper, as we have already seen, to sing a hymn as the language and sentiments of others; sometimes expressing our own case and experience, sometimes not. But what we deliver in preaching or prayer, we always deliver as our own sentiments and language. The more excellent any composition is, it may be the more improper for our use in these exercises; because, in these, whatever we utter that is above our own knowledge or experience, is but hypocrisy and affectation. The effect of singing is not diminished, but increased, by the exactness with which a performer adheres to the words of a correct and pathetic ode. But if a condemned criminal were professedly to use the same formality in pleading for his life, if it appeared that he only repeated, as a school boy does his talk, some proper form of words composed for him by another, every one would be shocked at the gross absurdity. Now in preaching or praying, we should just speak, as we would do, were we in the circumstances of such a poor criminal; that is, we should use no other language than our present views or feelings naturally suggest. More particularly,

we may observe, that, in preaching, we profess to declare, according to any measure of knowledge the Lord has enabled us in the use of means to attain, what is contained in the sense of the words of the Holy Spirit;—and to shew how they are profitable for doctrine, or how they are profitable for reproof; and for other things belonging to the furtherance of the Christian life. Now, for a person professing to do all this, to do nothing but repeat the words of scripture, is only to mock the hearers.* As to prayer, we should consider what our desires really are; and next, what of them are scriptural and what not: Those alone that are scriptural, or agreeable to the precepts and promises of the word, are to be expressed in prayer: As for such as are not so, we are to pray for deliverance from them. This rule being duly observed, we ought to use no other language than what serves to express our own scriptural desires. Even in social prayer, a person cannot, without hypocrisy, utter any other scriptural petitions than what are, in some real measure, his own desires, and while they are scriptural (and not imprudently restricted to something of a personal or peculiar nature which would be more

* The Socinians and Quakers pretend to express their own anti-scriptural notions in the words of scripture. This affectation is very blameable; First, as it leads people to take up with the mere sound of words in detached expressions, without considering the scope of the sacred writer where these expressions are used: And Secondly, because the mere repetition of the words of scripture, when a person is called to declare what he takes to be the doctrine of it on a particular head, has much the air of an attempt to deceive; it being no proper answer to the question, but an evasion of it. An honest man, on the same occasion, would express the view he had of such a doctrine, in his own words, as clearly and fully as he could.

N. B. It is hoped, the candid reader will understand the above remark as respecting men's explanations and defences of their religious tenets and especially when a plausible accommodation of a text is advanced into the place of an argument. There is a judicious application of scriptural expression which is very favourable and edifying, as, 1. When the words of scripture are applied to a point of doctrine, which the context and scope of the place shew, they were originally meant to express. 2. When an expression is applied to some matter of Christian practice or experience manifestly parallel to what is spoken of in the place from which the expression is taken. 3. In prayer, when the words of scripture express the sense that we really have of our wants, of our sins, and our mercies, they are the happiest we can employ.

proper for secret prayer) others ought heartily to join in them, the natural unaffected expression of the present desires of him who speaks, corresponding with the present desires of those who join with him, being the proper, appointed mean of the communion of the Lord's people in that exercise. Besides, the promise of the Spirit hath such an express and peculiar respect to prayer above other duties, as cannot well be understood of any thing less than a peculiar assistance in directing us what to pray for, and in the utterance of our requests.* This peculiar agency of the Spirit in prayer, cannot be understood merely of the exercise of grace: for that is by the Holy Spirit in other duties no less than in prayer. Now, our being confined to set forms of prayer, is not only unsuitable to the nature of prayer as it is an expression of our desires; but also to the speciality of that assistance which the Lord the Spirit affords his people in prayer above other duties.

THE last argument we shall use against departing from the scripture system of Psalmody, is drawn from the dangerous consequences of doing so. While men have been attempting to justify the introduction of human forms of Psalmody, they still pretend, that they have a great esteem and veneration for the scripture songs, and that all they plead for is the lawfulness of using human compositions in conjunction with them; but much of the reasoning, such as it is, which they employ in support of the use of such human compositions in public worship, and indeed the use of them itself, once introduced, (since men are always fonder of their own inventions than divine institutions,) have a manifest tendency to exclude the use of the scripture songs altogether. Accustomed to human forms of Psalmody in their public worship, the people will gradually, it is to be feared, lose any taste they ever had for the scripture songs. They will, at last, have as little disposition to read or meditate on them, as to sing them. In vain will they be exhorted to revere the sacred scriptures in all its parts as the word of God. The neglect of the scripture songs in the public praises of the church, whatever ingenious things may be said in justification of it, will naturally lead the bulk of church-members to neglect even the private use of them. Thus, notwithstanding the fine apologies

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* Zechar. xii. 10.

Rom. viii. 26.

Jude 20.

of the Romish doctors for the use of images in their worship; such as, that they do not mean to direct their worship to the images, or to place any confidence in them; yet it is well known that the poor ignorant people that are led by them, do actually consider these images as objects of confidence and adoration.*

FURTHER, the advocates for the use of human compositions in the public praises of the church, have been led to speak blasphemously of the scripture songs, calling them *Jewish psalms*, *curfing psalms*, and the like;—and also to disparage the whole Old Testament: teaching that it did not direct perishing sinners to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only way of their access to and acceptance with God; or to make use of his name as their great plea with God; and that the New Testament alone (and consequently not at all the Old) “declares the worship and ordinances which the King and Head of the church hath appointed for his followers now.”† Such tenets used to be stigmatized in the Protestant churches as Socinian tenets:‡ in-

* “To give another instance from the history of Popery: the worship of saints was first introduced as fit to be added to the worship of God; but the policy of the Romish church having gained this point, the worship of God has disappeared, in a great measure, out of their public service, being supplanted by that of the saints. Preachers beg the assistance of the blessed Virgin in the beginning of their sermons, and the whole of the Psalms are profanely applied to her in a blasphemous work, entitled, “Our Lady’s Psalter.” C.

† A Sermon on Psalmody. Pages 15, and 35.

‡ The following extract from the work of a Dutch divine who flourished in the beginning of the present century, may satisfy the reader of the truth of what is here asserted; the book being only a short view of the common doctrine of the Protestant churches: *Perperam Sociniani volunt*, &c. The Socinians falsely maintain that the following things were added under the New Testament; 1. *The worship of the Son*; though it was expressly enjoined under the Old Testament, Psal. ii. 12. *Kiss the Son*; and exercised, Gen. xlviii. 6. *The angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads!* 2. *The worship of the Father in the Son as Mediator*; which was also enjoined under that dispensation, faith in the Messiah being prescribed, Hab. ii. 4. *The just by his faith shall live*; and exercised, Psalm lxxx. 16. 18. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.* Dan. ix. 17. *For the Lords sake.* 3. *The duty of praying*; which was enjoined Psalm l. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, &c.; and exercised by all the saints. 4. *That form of*

deed they well accord with the denial of Christ's divinity, and with the blasphemous opinion that he was no King or Head of the church before his incarnation; but not at all with the opposite truths.

THE authoritative imposing of a human system of Psalmody, whether in order to be used in public worship by itself, or as a

prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer; which is no new duty, but only a help in discharging an old one; nor indeed contains any thing new as to things or the order of them. Marckii Christianæ Theologiæ Medulla, Cap. xii. The Anabaptists, says another systematic writer, think that the Old Testament is now abrogated, because we are said to be not under the law, but under grace, confounding the law with the Old Testament: The Socinians are of the same opinion, because they maintain, that the religion of the Old Testament is essentially different from the religion of the New Testament; in regard that, under the Old Testament, men were saved by the observation of the law; while we are saved by the observation of the gospel: they think, therefore, that the reading of the Old Testament is now not necessary, or at least less useful. On the contrary, the Reformed maintain that even under the New Testament the divine authority of both Testaments is the same; and, therefore, that the Old Testament is as necessary and useful to be read, as the New: Our reasons are, 1. That the books of the Old Testament are of divine inspiration as well as those of the New, 2 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. and, therefore, of infallible truth and authority. 2. That the Old Testament was given to the church for a rule of faith and manners as well as the New, Psalms cxlvii. 19, 20. Rom. iii. 2. and ix. 4. 3. Nor do we read of its abrogation in the New Testament. 4. But on the contrary it is confirmed by the command of Christ, John v. 39. Matth. v. 17, 18. by his practice, Luke xxiv. 29. and by his referring us to it, Luke xvi. 29. Besides, he made use of the Old Testament continually in refuting his adversaries, Matth. iv. 7. and xix. 13. and xii. 3, 4. and xxii. 29, 43. which was also the practice of the apostles; of Peter, Acts iii. 20. Of Paul, Acts xviii. 28. &c. 5. The whole doctrine of the New Testament is contained in the Old. Paul, Acts xxvi. 22. declares that he said nothing beside what is contained in the Old Testament. So much is this the case, that the Bereans examined the doctrine of the New Testament by the Old, Acts xvii. 11. To Jesus, indeed, all the prophets are said to bear testimony, Acts x. 40. Luke xxiv. 27. 6. Nay, some articles of our faith are delivered more clearly and at greater length in the Old than in the New Testament, as the articles concerning the creation of the world, the fall of man, &c. 7. The Old Testament is said to be the foundation of faith, and of the Christian church, Eph. ii. 20. Acts xxiv. 14. 8. Great and manifold is the usefulness of the Old Testament, even under the New, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17. Rom. xv. 4. *Musgricht's Theoretico-Practica Theologia, Libro primo, capite secundo, Sect. xxxv.*

supplement to the inspired songs, would be no less than an act of insufferable tyranny; because no church has any authority from the Lord Christ for so doing. No judicature on earth can produce such evidence either of the necessity of such a human system of Psalmody, or yet of the sufficiency of the particular one they fix upon, to answer the various cases and necessities of Christians, as is absolutely necessary to make the imposition of it any way reasonable. On the other hand, if a church recommends the use of hymns of human composition, and yet lays down no rule, establishes no system of these compositions; there can be no uniformity in the worship of God maintained, according to the Presbyterian, that is, the scriptural plan of church-order. Every congregation will continually be getting new hymns. Parties or factions will be continually arising from a capricious attachment to different sets of hymns. Nor will there be any way of settling such disputes; no mortal being able to give any tolerable reason for preferring one of these sets of hymns to another.

BUT the chief danger arises from the principle upon which human compositions are introduced into the public Psalmody of the church, namely, that the ordinances of God may be improved upon by the addition of human devices. The principle being allowed in one instance, however small it may seem in itself, the way will be prepared for organs, images, holy days, set forms of prayer, altars, surplices, or any thing that may suit the ruling taste and manners of the times.

THE prevalence of this scheme will be both a cause and an evidence of the great and general prevalence of ignorance and irreligion. In such a night season, the enemy will, no doubt, be busy in sowing tares; that is, in disseminating heresies; and hymns, it is likely, will be a very successful and unsuspected mean of conveying them into the minds of the people, while they are lulled asleep by the charms of music and poetry.*

IT is vain to say, that the power of godliness prevailed in the early ages of the church, even after the introduction of such

* The Methodists actually introduce their peculiar doctrines into hymns of their own composition, which they artfully intermix with others that express different doctrines:

hymns into their worship; for we may now see, that this custom was one of the evils which prepared the way for the grand apostacy, and an instrument of promoting it. And since the re-

To give a few instances;—the doctrine of universal redemption occurs frequently in their hymns,

His soul was once an offering made
For every soul of man :

{ Page 2d of the Pocket Hymn
book, prefaced by Thomas
Coke and Francis Asbury.

What shall I do to make it known
What thou for all mankind hast done?

Ibid page 126.

One of their pastoral hymns begins thus,

Lovers of pleasure more than God,
For you he suffered pain;
Swearers, for you he spilt his blood;
And shall he bleed in vain?

The Arminian doctrine of man's natural ability to will and do something in order to secure salvation, is often taught,

O may we thus ensure
A lot among the blest;
And watch a moment to secure
An everlasting rest.

Ibid. Page 17.

A charge to keep I have,
A never-dying soul to save.

Ibid. Page 70.

In the following passage, from another hymn, a natural and legal resolution, formed upon a natural apprehension of eternal misery, is ignorantly put for saving faith.

While they enjoy their Saviour's love
Must I in torments dwell?
Ah! no; I still may turn and live;
For still his wrath delays
He now vouchsafes a kind reprieve
And offers me his grace.
I will accept his offers now,
From every sin depart,
Perform my oft repeated vow,
And render him my heart.
I will improve what I receive,
The grace through Jesus given:
Sure, if with God on earth I live,
To live with God in heaven.

formation that has been attained by the Protestant churches, the admission of this and other corruptions into the worship of God, will be far more inexcusable than before the rise of Antichrist. It seems that the guilt and danger of corrupting the ordinances of the Lord Christ, by a mixture of human devices, will be increased, as the time of his second coming draws near. Hence he presses us to a stedfast adherence to our holy profession, from the consideration of the suddenness of his coming: *Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast.*

This, it seems, is conversion, according to the Methodist scheme. But we have no natural ability to think a right thought, and far less to turn thoroughly to God upon an apprehension of hell. Therefore the method of conversion that is here exemplified is building without a foundation. Matth. vii. 26, 27. Isai. iv. 11. Luke xiv. 28, 29, 30.

The doctrine of perfection in this life is a favourite theme.

Let me in thy Spirit live:
Live, till all thy life I know,
Perfect through my Lord below.

ibid. Page 43.

Let me be now in thee
A new spotless creature :
Perfect, when I walk before thee,
Soon or late, then translate
To the realms of glory.

ibid. Page 50.

O make me all like thee
Before I hence remove:
Let me thy witness live,
When sin is all destroyed.

ibid. Page 87.

They represent their attainment as above that of the angels

The pardoning God I know,
And feel the blood applied :
I view the Lamb in his own light
Whom angels dimly see.

ibid. Page 27.

Another doctrine which they teach in their hymns is the liability of the saints to fall away totally and finally.

I rode on the sky,
Freely justified I !
Ah! where am I now,
When was it, or how
That I fell from my heaven of grace ?

ibid. 203.

The Fourth Proposition.

That, in the public praises of the church, the outward part ought to be conducted with decency and simplicity; but the spiritual part ought chiefly to be regarded.

THE decency in the manner of singing, that ought to be studied by worshipping families or congregations, is such an agreement or harmony of voices as may fitly represent an agreement of minds, in understanding and believing what is sung, and in the exercise of suitable gracious affections.

It should be remembered that the proper means of exciting these gracious affections, is not the music, but the precious truths of God as conveyed to us in his own word. It is true, music serves to excite *natural* affections; but it is a delusion to suppose that it will, in like manner, excite those that are *supernatural* and *heavenly*; for such affections spring from nothing but faith apprehending the word, or Christ Jesus in that word. It is *in believing*, not through the utterance or hearing of musical sounds, that *the God of hope fills us with joy and peace*. Hence nothing can be a mean of exciting gracious affections any otherwise than as it is a mean of begetting or increasing our faith, or of enlightening our understandings in the true and solid knowledge of Christ. When the matter is rightly considered, it will be found, that the use of musical airs or tunes in religious worship, is far more limited and circumscribed than is generally imagined. A few of them, that are chiefly recommended by their gravity and simplicity, may be necessary to represent the hearty agreement of gospel-worshippers; and to prevent the temptation to heart-wandering or distraction of mind arising from a rude confusion of voices. Those who expect greater advantages to religious worship from the art of music, will either find themselves miserably disappointed, or, what is infinitely worse, they will be led to mistake some carnal reveries or enthusiastic delusions, for the exercise of saving grace and spiritual affections in the worship of God. Further, when men propose any thing more by their use of the art of music in religious worship, than the preservation of outward order, or the preventing of that dis-

traction of mind, which the want of that order is apt to occasion; when they employ the charms of music to excite devout and spiritual affections; the native consequence is, not only that, in truth, the affections to which these epithets justly belong, can never be attained by any such means; but the attempt, leading to the use of complicated airs in which the art is most displayed, in producing the most perfect and affecting melody, has a manifest tendency to that distraction of mind, which a more simple and artless concord in singing would be a proper mean of preventing. For worshippers are always distracted, or drawn away from their proper exercise, when their attention to the modulations of the voice is greater than to the matter of the scripture songs; or when their affections are moved rather by the sweetness of the music, than by any spiritual or believing views of the things of God. This distraction of mind is increased, when a sort of music is employed, which is unsuitable to the gravity and solemnity of religious worship; as, when such light airs are introduced, as, from the principle of association, suggest the idea of profane and ordinary singing. But it is worst of all, when men begin to place religion in any particular mode of singing; as when it is reckoned that more homage or service is done to God, by singing what are called *parts*, or by singing *alternately*, than by that manner of singing which is more plain and artless: Because it never can be shown that God has required such particular modes of singing in his worship: and therefore those who insist upon them, as rendering our worship more acceptable to God, cannot be acquitted of superstition.

UPON these principles, our British ancestors, (whether denominated Puritans or Presbyterians) who were so *valiant for the truth upon the earth*, who did and suffered so much to hand down the ordinances of Christ to us in their purity, condemned the following particulars in the public singing of the church of England, particularly in the worship of their cathedrals.

FIRST, with regard to organs and other musical instruments, they looked upon the use of them in the worship of God under the New Testament, as quite unwarrantable. It is true, that instrumental musick was used in the worship of God under the Old Testament. But this use of it, after the time of David (and it does not appear that it was ordinarily used in divine

worship before his time) was confined to the temple, which was the great theatre of the ceremonial worship. The following words in the twenty ninth chapter of second Chronicles, represent it as a circumstance that attended the offering of sacrifices: *And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar; and when the burnt offering began the song of the Lord began with the trumpets and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpets sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished.*

PLATO calls instrumental music an unmeaning thing. It has indeed no meaning, but what is annexed to it by fancy, or by institution. As to fancy, instead of indulging it in the exercises of religion, it is a very great part of the business of those who aim at worshipping God in spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, to curb and restrain it, to watch and pray against it: and therefore, such worshippers will guard against a fanciful annexing of religious and devout ideas to instrumental music, as including both enthusiasm and superstition in it: Enthusiasm, as it implies the undue influence of imagination in our worship; superstition, as we have no divine warrant for connecting such religious ideas with such particular sounds of an organ, harp, stringed instrument, or any other musical instrument. It is allowed, however, that a meaning may be annexed to instrumental music by institution. Thus it is by institution that one sort of instrumental music becomes a signal to prepare for battle; another sort of it a signal to retreat. Thus the cymbals, psalteries, and harps, the incense, the lamps, and many other things in the temple, were in themselves without meaning; but, by God's appointment, they became significant types or shadows of good things to come. The instrumental music, attending the burnt offerings of the temple, signified the joy and triumph which arise to believers from the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the Revelation of John, (a book full of allusions to the usages of the ceremonial law) the standing of believers with everlasting joy upon the foundation of the Redeemer's righteousness, is represented by *their standing upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, having the harps of God.** The practice of

* Rev. xv. 2.

instrumental music, declared, (as every other part of ceremonial worship did) that Christ was not yet come; and therefore must now be utterly unwarrantable: This is to Judaize indeed. Besides, instrumental music is inconsistent with the simplicity of New Testament worship; which allows us to admit no other forms of worship, than such as are enjoined in the moral law, which is the same under both Testaments, together with baptism and the Lord's supper, and the change of the day for observing the moral duty of a sabbath to the Lord: These three are appointed in the New Testament. The principle upon which one human invention, or the practice of one Old Testament ceremony is admitted into the worship of God, will plead as strongly for the admission of a hundred. Protestant churches are the more inexcusable in retaining this corruption, as they have not the pretence of antiquity for it, which is the common plea for many other corruptions; for it has not been pretended that instrumental music was used in the church before the seventh century.*

SECONDLY, Another thing in the worship of the church of England, and especially in their cathedrals, which the Puritans testified against, was, that the singing of the divine praises, in these churches, is restricted to so many persons appointed to that business; others hardly ever joining in the exercise, as not

* Some say, that Pope Vitalien introduced the organ about the year 606: Others, that it was not introduced till the year 820, in the reign of Lewis the Debonnair. But Cajetanus, a writer of the Popish communion, owns that organs were not used in the worship of the church, even in the time of Thomas Aquinas, that is, in the 13th century. And Cajetanus's opinion is supported by these words of Thomas: "The church," says he, "does not employ musical instruments, such as harps, and psalteries in the divine praises, lest she should seem to judaize." A passage in a treatise by Zepperus, concerning the Mosaic law, intimates, that organs are retained in some of the reformed churches; "Where," says he, "after all the parts of divine worship are ended, and the congregation dismissed, then the music of the organs is struck up. This is allowed for a political end, namely, for the sake of those who desire to be intertained with instrumental music." *Dé Lege Mosaica*, Lib. 4. Cap. 9. The same author maintains, that the instrumental music which the Jews used in the worship of God, belouged to the ceremonial law, and is now abolished. Calvin thinks that musical instruments are no more fit to be used in the worship of the Christian church, than incense, lamps, and other shadows of the law of Moses.

being required by the rules of their cathedral worship : though the scripture always represents *singing praises to God, and speaking to themselves in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*, as the common duty and exercise of church-members. The singers, whom David was directed, (no doubt, by the holy Spirit) to appoint, were Levites, and their office related to the instrumental and peculiar music of the temple, and was undoubtedly ceremonial. With respect to the *Psalmistæ*, or singers of the New Testament church, as they are not mentioned in scripture, so they were never heard of in the Christian church, till about the beginning of the fourth century. For, from the apostolic age till then, singing was a part of divine worship, in which the whole body of the church always joined together : no such refinement in singing being then affected, as rendered it impracticable for persons unskilled in music as an art.

THIRDLY, The Puritans and Presbyterians considered the manner of singing in the cathedrals and other churches of England, as inconsistent with the simplicity of New Testament worship, in the following respect : In these churches various parts of music, such as, *bass, tenor, treble, and counter*, were performed together ; so many singing one part, so many another. This formed what is called a *Symphony*. Their singing was also *alternate or responsive* ; in regard that so much of the matter would be sung by the whole band of singers ; and so much of it by a part only : and sometimes the matter would be divided amongst them, so many singing one stanza, so many another ; sometimes vocal music was used alone, sometimes it was accompanied by the admired notes of the organ. These fantastick manœuvres our sober ancestors allowed might do very well for worldly amusements, or to divert children ; but were quite alien from the simplicity and gravity of the New Testament worship. Nor could the antiquity of this practice be pleaded in its favour. For though we should allow that some alternate singing had crept into the worship of the church as early as the fourth or fifth century ; yet there seems to have been little use of music as an art, in divine worship, or at least no system like that which is now called *Harmony or Symphony*, till after the seventh century.* Whensoever it was introduc-

* It was about the year of our Lord 735, that Pope Gregory the fifth, introduced what was then called, by way of distinction, *Cantus Musicalis*,

ed, it is a manifest departure from the simplicity of New Testament worship; and of dangerous tendency: for hereby the manner of singing becomes the principal object; the matter is little attended to. One should think that persons would not be very fond of this mode of singing, if they were exercised like Bernard, who, in his meditations, challenges himself after public worship, for having had *more delight in the modulation of the voice, than real compunction of heart*: or like Augustine, who says in his confessions, *When I happen to be more moved with the music, than with the matter sung, I confess that I sin most grievously; and in that case I would choose rather not to hear any singing*. Indeed, according to the mode of singing we now speak of, so many are the divisions, repetitions, and pauses; and such is the attention given to the different parts, that, instead of the *manner* being so ordered that the *matter* sung may be chiefly regarded, and that all may join in the exercise of praise, the musical abilities of a part of the congregation are displayed for an entertainment to those who do not choose to sing. Thus, one part of the assembly is kept from praising God by listening to the voices of the other; while these are no less diverted from that duty by attention to musical rules, and an anxiety to merit the approbation of those who hear them.

It is but a poor apology for this mode of singing, that it may allure strangers to attend on the ordinances of religion. For it is by no means a proper way of proving the warrantableness of any practice, to alledge that it has some external advantages attending it: for there are few corruptions in princi-

singing according to the art of music; that is, when a choir of boys sung an air or tune with four different modulations of the voice at the same time; thus forming a Symphony; which, says Danæus, in his *Isagoge*, part 4th. is nothing else but a corruption of ecclesiastical singing; having nothing of piety in it, but only calculated to please the ear. It is true, a kind of alternate or responsive way of singing seems to have been in use in the time of Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian, that is, in the fifth century. He tells a story, in the eight chapter of his sixth book, of Ignatius having introduced this kind of singing into the worship of the church at Antioch, in consequence of his having seen a vision of angels who sung the praises of the holy Trinity in this manner: a very gross fable indeed. Theodoret, a historian of the same century, ascribes the introduction of this custom to Flavian and Diodorus, who seem to have been contemporary with him.

ple. or practice, but may be defended in this way. Besides, if a person have no other motive to attend public ordinances than to be entertained by good-singing; if he be one of those

Who, when convenient, to the church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there :

it is no way probable, that he will give much attention to any thing except what was his principal object. Preachers, too, will be led to shorten their sermons, in order that there may be the more singing for the sake of strangers; to whom the preaching of the everlasting gospel, is, it seems, no entertainment or inducement to continue their attendance. We are, to be sure, too much enlightned in the present age, to be taught by one of the old Popish schoolmen; yet, it is hoped, a sentence of Thomas Aquinas may be repeated without offence. *Doctrine, says he, and preaching are much more noble means of exciting men to devotion, than singing.*

FOURTHLY. The Puritans and Presbyterians also complained, that in the cathedrals and other churches of England, they sing prose set to an artificial and complex kind of music; in the singing of which none could possibly join but such as were acquainted with music as an art. The passages thus set to music were called *Anthems*.* The words of some of these anthems, it was also alledged, were improper for being sung, such as, the Creed, and the verses taken from the eleventh chapter of the gospel of John, from the nineteenth of Job, and from the sixth of the first epistle to Timothy. The non-conformists, of whom we now speak, insisted that the church of England, like the other reformed churches, should use a verse translation of the Psalms, in singing which, a few plain tunes would be all the music necessary for public worship.

FIFTHLY. The Presbyterians also testified against the singing of human compositions in public worship. They complained,

* How much more regard is paid to the music than to the words of such Anthems, is well known. "In the union of Poetry and Music," says Dr. Gregory in his *Comparative View*, "the Music should be subservient to the Poetry:—The very reverse is the common practice; the Poetry is ever made subservient to the Music. Handel made those who composed the words of his Oratorios, alter and transpose them, as he thought best suited his Music."

that, in many of the churches of England, the hymn, entitled, *Te Deum*, was oftner sung, than any of the inspired songs.*

SUCH was the Testimony of our faithful predecessors against the corruptions of the ordinance of singing that had taken place in the church of England; † a testimony which they held at the peril of all that was dear to them in a world. How inexcusable will we be, if, in compliance with the prevailing humour of the day, we neglect to hold fast the same testimony: especially, considering, that our forefathers bound themselves, and us their posterity, by a solemn oath and covenant, ‡ to hold fast every part of scriptural reformation which they had attained? Shall we again admit any of these abominations which the Lord's people were led, through his good hand upon them, to purge out?

* The holy fathers, Ambrose and Augustine, if we may believe Cardinal Bellarmine, composed this hymn by divine inspiration, and sung it alternately at the baptism of Augustine, to the astonishment of the whole congregation that witnessed it: a story proper enough, to be sure, for those that are given up to strong delusions to believe lies.

† We refer the reader for further satisfaction, as to the foregoing particulars, to Mr. Calderwood's *Altare Damascenum*, and other vindications of the Non-conformists.

‡ That we may be under an additional obligation to endeavour to preserve the purity of God's ordinances, by an oath or covenant entered into for that purpose, is the doctrine of the Westminster Confession concerning vows: Chap. xxii. sect. vi. where a vow is declared to be that whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties, or to other things so far and so long as they may fitly conduce hereunto. Thus, as Mr. Durham observes on the third command, "though our engagement to moral duties cannot make the obligation of God's command greater, yet we thereby join our approbation and consent to that, whereby, as by a positive super-added voluntary consent, we bind ourselves; so that, in some respect, we have two bonds (the law and our oath both) for one:—the latter makes the former have a more deep impression upon us." But some say, What have we in this land to do with the covenant engagements that were entered into in Britain? Answer, Those American churches, which consist, either wholly or chiefly, of persons who, themselves or their forefathers have been members of the the British churches, after these churches had entered into the solemn covenant engagements in question, cannot be freed from the obligation of them: for with respect to contracts or engagements of a public nature, such as these undoubtedly were, (the matter of them also being no other than moral duty) if the majority of any church

BUT it is not enough that we avoid these corruptions in the external part of this ordinance: it nearly concerns us, while we have the Lord's song in our mouths, that we be, at the same time, making melody to him with our hearts. It is particularly necessary that we have and exercise a spiritual understanding in this part of divine worship: for it is written in the forty seventh Psalm, *Sing ye praises with understanding.* It is but mocking of God, to have his words in our mouths, while we do not know or consider the meaning of them. People should not neglect to bring their Bibles to the place of worship; and, in the time of singing, it is proper, that, instead

be confessedly under the obligation of them, that church itself cannot, consistently with the common law of human society, be denied to be under the same obligation: For if this be denied, it must be for one or other of the following reasons; either 1. Because it was unlawful to enter into these engagements at all; or 2. Because they were binding upon that generation only that entered into them, and not upon posterity; or 3. Because, though the present generation in Britain and Ireland be under the obligation of them, yet the English or Irish who are settled in America, are freed from that obligation by crossing the Atlantic Ocean; or, 4. Because, though it be allowed that the majority of any church are under the obligation of these engagements, yet the church itself is free from it. But all these reasons are absurd and unscriptural. The first is contrary to the doctrine of the above mentioned chapter of our Confession of Faith, founded on the precepts, promises, and examples of the Lord's word, with respect to vowing and swearing to the Lord our God: See Psalm lxxvi. 11. *Isai. xix. 18, 21. Ezra x. Nehem. x.* The second is contrary to the general sense of mankind, for when, in any other case, was the posterity of those who, as a society entered into an oath, (the matter of which is lawful and necessary, having a manifest respect to posterity) denied to be under the obligation of such an oath? It was by no means a peculiarity of the people of Israel, but what was agreeable to the common nature of human societies, that the covenant which they entered into at Sinai, is all along under the Old Testament, considered as obligatory upon them. The absurdity of the third reason must necessarily strike every one, who reflects, that the great God, the party sworn to in these engagements, and the duty (to which they bind us) of holding fast whatever scriptural reformation has been attained, are the same all over the world. As to the fourth, it is contrary to the common order of human society: nay, it is hardly conceivable how the majority of individuals that compose a church, should be under a solemn covenant engagement to public reformation, and yet the church itself not under it. Thus, a professing people, in the circumstance we have specified, cannot deny, that they are under the obligation of those solemn covenant engagements, without great absurdity, and treachery towards God.

of gazing on the congregation, they should keep their eye on the verses that are sung, that they may the better have the sense of them.*

In the next place, we are to sing in the exercise of faith. The scripture-songs abound with expressions of an appropriating faith: as, in the beginning of the eighteenth Psalm. *I will love thee, O Lord my strength: The Lord is my rock and my for*

* When people attend on public ordinances, they ought, by no means to neglect to bring their Bibles along with them: 1. It is necessary to have their Bibles, as when the Psalm is read before singing, it is proper for the hearer to look to the passage proposed to be sung in the prose translation for the better understanding of it. 2. In what is commonly called a Lecture, the speaker, having read so many verses of scripture, endeavours to shew first the design of the whole; next, the connexion that the verses should have with one another; and, thirdly, to point out the force and propriety of the words and phrases used by the Holy Spirit: and, fourthly, to specify some of the principal doctrines or practical directions plainly included or implied in the words. This exercise, though the best calculated for edification, is become the most disregarded part of our public ministrations. The preachers may, perhaps, be in fault as well as the hearers: but one thing is evident from the very nature of this kind of discourse, that, not being addressed to the affections, but to the judgment, it must be unprofitable to careless and inattentive hearers. Indeed the things spoken of are such as ought always to interest our affections in the highest degree: but what is here said respects the form of discourse. Now, there is no probability at all that a hearer will give any proper attention, who will not take the pains to use so natural and obvious a mean of fixing it, as that of bringing his Bible to the place of worship, of keeping his eye on the verses whilst the minister reads them, and points out the connexion and the drift of them; and also on the words and phrases whilst he is endeavouring to shew the force and propriety of them, and to deduce practical observations from them. 3. Each particular even of a popular sermon is, or ought to be, confirmed by one or two pertinent texts. Now, if any of these texts be either read by the speaker, or be such as the hearer is unacquainted with, it must be of great use to have his Bible that he may seek them out and mark them immediately. When the passages are marked, and the hearer reviews them afterward, they will help him to recollect the particular observations which they were brought to confirm. How can a person that is concerned to profit by the word, neglect so obvious a help to the remembrance of it? 4. People in the country live generally at a considerable distance from their churches, in which case it is necessary that they bring their Bibles along with them, that they may use them in the intervals of public worship: They should then be reviewing the passage of scripture they have been hearing explained; and praying over it; or if they converse with one another, the Bible should furnish

truss, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower. And in another place, *In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, my refuge is in God.* In singing such passages, we should be deeply concerned to *obtain like precious faith.* The exercise of the saints, represented in the Psalms, teacheth us to know the various workings of our unbelief, and how to maintain a conflict with it. The word that we sing is to be received, not as the word of men, but as it is, in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in us. And as we have no gracious access to, nor acceptance with God, but in our Lord Jesus Christ; so we are particularly to remember that our sacrifices of praise are acceptable to God only by Jesus Christ: nor are we ever to think that we apprehend the sense "which the scripture songs were originally intended to convey," unless we have a spiritual discernment of them, as full of Christ, full of his glory and suitableness to our case. Further, considering the difficulty of this duty, and the peculiar backwardness of our hearts to the exercise of praise, considering the deadness of our affections, what other course should we take, when the Lord calls us to sing his praise, than that of essaying to look by faith to our Lord Jesus Christ, the repository of all the good of the new covenant, that his grace and Spirit may animate and encourage us to it, and grant us a God-glorifying and heart-enlarging exercise in it? And according to our faith, so will our performance of this duty be. Let us look to him for present supplies of grace according to the present calls to duty.

FURTHER, it is necessary that our singing be attended with the exercise of gracious affections. Singing is a natural and proper expression of our affections; and as the singing of Psalms is the ordinance of God, so we are to look to him that it may be

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them with the subjects of their conversation: or if they speak of providential dispensations, it should be in the way of comparing them with scripture. It is, in a manner, the whole business of ministers just to point out to their people such doctrines, reproofs, or instructions of the Bible as are suitable to their case; other than they find written there they have no commission to deliver. So that they must be continually referring to it: and how can persons be duly *taking heed what they hear*, who neglect to bring their Bibles along with them by which they are to judge of it?

an effectual mean of promoting the exercise of those gracious affections in our souls, of which it is so proper an expression. For it must argue a most stupid insensibility to sing the lively representations, we have in the Psalms, of God's glorious excellencies, without the greatest reverence and astonishment, without being concerned to attain a superlative love of him who is the object of our praise; or to sing of the guilt and pollution of our sin without a heart-felt grief and hatred of it; or to sing of the eternal salvation of his people through a Redeemer, including their various temporal deliverances, without gratitude and joy; or to sing of the judgments that he executes upon the wicked, without fear and trembling.*

It is, moreover, to be observed here, that we are by no means to ground our expectation of spiritual profit to our souls, upon any natural connexion that may appear to be between any outward exercise and the emotions or passions of our minds: because the connexion between any outward exercise and the good of our souls is purely supernatural, depending upon the appointment and blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit; according to these words of our Saviour, *The Spirit is that which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.* It is true, the wisdom and goodness of God is conspicuous in pitching upon these outward exercises for the purposes of religion which are most becoming, easy, and natural to us: so much so, indeed, as to intimate sufficiently to us, that we ought, by no means, to consider the difficulty, the excellency, or the power of religion as lying in such outward things. *Bodily exercise,* says the apostle, *profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things.* Under *bodily exercise* are comprehended all the outward exercises that we use in the duties of religion, whether those of voice, gesture, or any other, considered with respect to their natural effect or tendency. In this view, they are opposed to godliness; and without spiritual profit. But when these exercises proceed from a regard to God's authority in the appointment of them, and are attended with a believing dependence on his grace and Spirit according to his promise, then they truly belong to that

* We refer the reader for a fuller account of the manner of singing, to Mr. Marshall's sermon on "the Propriety of singing the Psalms of David, in Christian worship," particularly the third head.

godliness which is profitable to all things. Their profitableness, in this view, arises not from any natural virtue or tendency in these exercises themselves, but *only* from the Lord's institution, and blessing, and the effectual working of his Spirit. We are to be diligent in the use of means and ordinances; but to expect any deliverance to our souls from the natural virtue or tendency of any outward exercises we may use in observing them, is to deceive ourselves; nay, it is highly provoking to God, because hereby we make idols of them, and put them in the place of his grace and Spirit. The ground, therefore, upon which we are to look for spiritual profit by singing Psalms, is by no means the natural power and influence of the art of music; but solely the Lord's appointment, and the promise of his Spirit to make his ordinances effectual to our salvation. As much music as preserves outward decency and order, is all that the institution of Christ requires in order to the edification of our souls: and no farther spiritual benefit is to be expected from a higher degree of artificial melody. We may as well place religion in holy-days, in pictures, in beads, as in certain musical arrangements.

WE shall now conclude with a few reflections.

1. WE should be especially thankful for, and studious to preserve, in purity, the ordinances that the Lord hath appointed in his word, these being the only outward means which he will bless and make effectual for the beginning and carrying on of a work of sanctification in our souls. While corruptions of these ordinances prevail, it is necessary, that such as desire to be found faithful to the Lord Christ, to the present and following generations, unite in bearing a public and particular testimony against such corruptions: The church mentions the Lord's granting his people the banner of such a testimony as great matter of thankfulness amidst all the sad things she had to lament. *Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee: that it may be displayed because of the truth.* Woe to that people from whom this banner, after some display of it among them, is wholly removed. The Lord is laying of them, *They are joined to their idols: let them alone.*

2. It becomes us to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord for the iniquities of our holy things, particularly with respect

to the duty of singing praise. Such as, not singing with the voice at all, though the tongue be given us as our glory, that we may therewith glorify God: neglecting or undervaluing opportunities of being engaged in this duty: not being exercised, when we are going to sing, in looking up to the Lord for his grace and Spirit to fit and enable us to praise: not being duly attentive to the matter sung, or concerned to attain a right spiritual understanding of it; or the particular application of it to our own case: not aiming at communion with God in this exercise, as desiring and hoping to praise him for ever; being chargeable with much heart-wandering and a dead frame of mind in it: not having suitable impressions of the greatness and goodness of God in Christ: not being duly exercised in trusting in him for the mercies of which we sing; or in acquiescing in the threatenings of the word against the unbelieving and impenitent: not stirring up our souls and all that is within us to bless and magnify his name: not studying to have abasing thoughts of ourselves, and large and exalted thoughts of him: not walking in love, which would sweetly constrain us to this duty, and make us delight in it. In short, the evils we are guilty of as to this ordinance only, are innumerable; and urge us to make an immediate application to *the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

3. **T**HOUGH the praises of the Lord should be in our mouths habitually or continually, yet there are occasions, even in this vale of tears, in which the exercise of singing is peculiarly seasonable. For example, it very properly follows the participation of the Lord's supper: our Saviour and his disciples sung an hymn after the first celebration of this ordinance. Surely, if we have had any right discernment of the Lord's body at his table, it will dispose us to sing of his righteousness and salvation.* Again, if the Lord has granted us any sensible deliverance from our spiritual enemies, or any sensible beginning of a victory over them, it ill becomes us to neglect the praises of that free and sovereign grace which has done

* The principal heads of this discourse were delivered on Monday after the celebration of the Lord's supper, at Muddy-Creek, in June, 1790.

all. To this purpose, it is said, in the inscription of the eighteenth Psalm, that *David spake unto the Lord all the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.* Faith leads the Lord's people to sing even under the cross, especially when they are suffering for the cause of Christ; as Paul and Silas, when they were thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, not only prayed at midnight, but *sang praises to God.*

4. FROM the view we have taken of this subject we may understand what constitutes the harmony of the church's song: it is the same word of Christ being in the mouth and in the heart of believers. Having the same spirit of faith, they are all taught to *sing as it were a new song*, unanimously saying in faith, *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.* The mystery of the right manner of singing this song cannot be discovered by all the natural wisdom, sagacity, and diligence in the world. The true understanding of it is peculiar to those who *hear and learn of the Father.* *No man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.**

WE may add a word to two sorts of persons: First, to such as are brought under deep concern about attaining the saving knowledge of this new song. To such we say, Have you ceased from the song of the worldling, being convinced that the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world are vanity and vexation of spirit? Have the snares of it in which ye have been most entangled been made bitter as death to you? Have you ceased from the song of the legalist; not daring to mention your own righteousness, (which you see to be filthy rags indeed) before a holy God as the ground of your acceptance with him? Dare you sing of nothing but Christ and what is in Christ? Sensible of your ignorance of this new song, are you looking to the Lord that he may teach you? Behold we bring you good tidings of great joy; namely, *That the Lord our God hath raised up unto us a prophet, like unto Moses*, but infinitely greater than Moses. It is his work and office to teach us this new song; and

* Revel. xiv. 2.

he teacheth powerfully and irresistibly ; and it is necessary that he do so, because we are utterly unwilling to learn it, till he make us willing. He unstops our ears, and makes the tongue of the dumb to sing. O what a miracle is it that any of Adam's ruined family should ever learn this new song! Both the purchase of it by the blood of the Son of God, and the effecting of it by the power of the Holy Ghost, are miraculous. The redemption we call you to receive, as what God is now making over to you as a free gift, includes both the price and the power by which we are brought to sing this new song: the power being as victorious, effectual, and everlasting, as the price was rich and satisfactory to the law and justice of God. None can have any more interest in the one than in the other. Indeed, if ye have got any proper view of the sinfulness and misery of your natural state, you will acknowledge freely that you stand fully in as much need of the one, as of the other: and ye will look upon the heretics that would separate them as (in attempting to do so) real enemies of your salvation. This song is begun in the day of effectual calling: and in whomsoever it is thus really begun, it will infallibly be continued till it be exalted to the perfect manner of singing within the veil. The language aimed at by the feeblest exercise of faith is that of the Psalmist, *I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being* :* any being, either out of the body or in the body, either in time or eternity. *Whosoever believeth, shall not be ashamed* : it is impossible that the smallest measure of faith should ever be disappointed. *The expectation of the poor, (or even any part or degree of a believing expectation, singly grounded on the Lord's word) shall not perish for ever. As thy faith is, so shall it be unto thee.* All true believers, *believe in Christ for life everlasting.* † We have no true faith, unless we believe the record of God concerning his Son. *And this is his record, that he hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* ‡ It is true, that this faith, as to its exercise, in many that belong to the Lord, is but weak and wavering: so that they are apt to call their faith unbelief; as the Father of the child mentioned in the ninth chapter of the gospel of Mark, saying, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.* But their great concern is to be strengthened and established in the faith; keeping up the

* Psalm cxlvi. 2. † 1 Tim. i. 16. ‡ 1 John v. 11.

earnest cry, *Lord, increase our faith* : as for such as are resting satisfied with a weak and wavering faith, trusting to it as sufficient to carry them to heaven ; they are in a gross delusion, taking up with a notion or fancy, never having known at all what it is to believe on the Son of God. If ye have indeed begun to learn this new song, you will be deeply sensible of your ignorance ; ready to say with Agur, *Surely, I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man : I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.* You will not be able to find words to express how much you prize the Lord Jesus as your prophet, your *Zaphnath-paaneah*, the Revealer of secrets, who teacheth you to sing the new song. You will delight in his word, which is the matter of that song ; and you will relish, in a peculiar manner, those parts of the word which bear the form and designation of songs. You will be concerned that the whole tenor of your conversation, being such as becometh the gospel, may be one continued song of praise to your God and Redeemer ; according to what is written in the fiftieth Psalm, *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me : and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.* You will be studying, in your place and station, to invite others to join in this song : like the woman of Samaria, who as soon as she became acquainted with Christ herself, began to say to her fellow-citizens, *Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did : is not this the Christ ?* In fine, you will have a real desire and longing to join in the exalted strains of the glorified company that are now around the throne.

THE other sort of persons to whom we would offer a word, is those who care for none of these things : who neither know nor desire to learn any other song than that of the worldling or that of the legalist. The bulk of men are of this character. This is especially the case with the present generation ; as is evident from the prevailing neglect and contempt of God's word and ordinances ; which are now considered as an amusement, or, at most, as deserving some encouragement, only on account of their tendency to promote the order and decency of civil society : which is really an utter contempt of them ; because whilst they are not regarded or observed for the ends for which he appointed them, they are, in truth, not regarded at all as his ordinances, but rather despised. Further,

it is too manifest, that the bulk of the present generation belong to this class, from their neglect of prayer, in secret and in their families; from their loathing the honey-comb of the gospel in its purity and simplicity; from the readiness with which the grossest heresies that can be broached are swallowed by multitudes; from the unanimity with which all the different parties amongst us, join together in condemning and attempting to crush any public testimony for truth, as if it implied bigotry, uncharitableness, and what not; from the fashionable contempt of religious principles, the most contradictory opinions in matters of religion being looked upon as equally true, or equally harmless, which a man may either receive or reject without being either better or worse; from the manifold immoralities which are not only committed, but justified and gloried in. *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.** God has been continuing to speak to this generation by his word and by his rod: but, both having been despised, we have reason to be apprehensive, that he is about to speak to them in such a manner as they will not be able to get shifted. The deep security in which men are so universally sunk is a symptom (that ought to alarm such as are capable of taking notice of it) of some wasteful and wide-spreading calamity being not far off, in order to give an effectual confutation of the Atheistical and infidel principles that are now become fashionable. *For the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.* Wherefore we say to the careless ones of this generation, *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man, whom ye have hitherto set at nought, even our Lord Jesus Christ, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him, all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets: *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days; a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.†* A day of public calamity may soon come: at any rate, death is certain and inevitable: and you know not how soon it may come to

* Jerem. vi. 15.

† Acts xiii. 32—41.

any one of you having no security for the prolongation of life to another day, to another hour, or minute. Now there is an opportunity of learning the new song ; there will be no learning of it in a future state : unless you begin to sing the new song now, you will hereafter, excluded from the society of the heavenly singers, have to howl, and weep, and gnash your teeth under the load of divine wrath, along with devils and the other damned, through eternity. *How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity ? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn you at my reproof : behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you ; I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded : but ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.** You know not how soon your day of grace may be ended : but, as yet, Christ is saying, *Behold me, behold me.* The Holy Spirit is saying, *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation ; as in the day of temptation in the wilderness ; when the children of Israel tempted me, proved me, and saw my work : Unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest. Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should come short of it, through unbelief.*

* Prov. i. 22—27. Psal. xciv. 7, 8, 9, 11.





A P P E N D I X.

No. I.

THE writer of this, not having the opportunity of consulting books that he wished, is far from pretending to be able to give a history of psalmody; but he hopes to be excused with every candid reader in attempting to obviate some prejudices that have prevailed on this subject, by the following observations.

I. **THOUGH** it could be shewn, that the singing of human compositions in publick worship, obtained as early as the beginning of the second century, yet this would not be sufficient to justify the practice from the charge of superstition. Because, (as hath been shown abundantly by our writers in the Popish and Episcopal controversies) there were manifold corruptions in doctrine and worship, which, even in that early period, prevailed very generally in the Christian church. In the beginning of the second century, Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, supposed to have been a disciple of the apostle John, and of great authority among the primitive Christians, taught, as Eusebius informs us, *that, after the resurrection, there should be a thousand years, in which Christ should reign on earth personally.* We learn from Justin Martyr's apology, that they mixed the sacramental wine with water; from Tertullian, that they used oil in the administration of baptism; and from Cyprian, that the Lord's supper was given to infants.* It was a principal subject of controversy, on what day Easter ought to be celebrated, though there is no divine warrant for the celebration of it at all. Thus the nearness of the ancient churches to the times of the apostles did not secure them from error and superstition.

II. **SEVERAL** arguments that have been used in support of the opinion, that hymns of human composition were sung in the

* Justin's Apolog. ad Antoninum Pium.—Tertullian de baptismo Cap. 7. Cyprian. epist. lix.

publick worship of the church in the early ages of Christianity, are far from being conclusive. There is indeed a passage of Tertullian, quoted by Grötius, on Matth. xxvi. 30. which intimates, that it was the custom in some Christian assemblies for every church member to be called forth to sing to the praise of God, if any thing proper for that exercise occurred to him, either out of the scriptures, or of his own gift. *Ut quisque de scripturis, vel de proprio ingenio, potest, provocatur in medium Deo canere.* But, what these words describe is the singing of individuals, every one according to his memory or his peculiar gift. It may, perhaps, be considered as some remains of these extraordinary gifts of prophesying which are said to have continued in the church, for some time after the decease of the apostles. *The prophesying* which the apostle speaks of, in Corinth. xi. 5. is understood by many interpreters of *singing the praises of God.* So the word seems to be used in 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 2, 3. 1 Sam. x. 5. At any rate, what is referred to in this, and similar passages that we meet with in writers of the second and third centuries, appears to have been, either irregular, or the exercise of an extraordinary gift: in either of which cases it is quite improper for imitation. We know of no hymns dictated in this manner, which ever came into use in the ordinary publick worship of the church. If there had been any such, one should think, there would have been some collection of them, either extant, or at least mentioned by Justin Martyr, Cyprian, or some other eminent ecclesiastical writer of the first three centuries. But among them there appears to be a deep silence on this head.

Some alledge, that the singing of human composures is referred to, in an expression that is used in Pliny's epistle to Trajan, concerning the case of those Christians, whom he had examined. The passage is to this purpose: "A nameless libel was presented containing the names of many. As to those who denied themselves ever to have been Christians, when, after my example, they had invocated the gods, and offered wine and incense to your statue, which for that purpose I commanded to be brought, with the images of the gods: and likewise blasphemed Christ, (which it is said no true Christian can be compelled to do,) I dismissed them. Others, mentioned also in the libel, confessed, that they had formerly been Christians, but that they had *renounced* that religion, some of them three years ago, others ma-

ny years, and one twenty five years. All which paid their reverence to your statue, and the images of the gods, and blasphemed Christ. They affirm, that the whole fault, or error of the Christians consisted in this; That it was their usual practice, upon a set, solemn day, to meet together before sun-rising, and to sing among themselves, *a hymn to Christ, as to God*, and to oblige themselves by a solemn oath, to commit no wickedness." As to these words, it is necessary to observe, that the practice here described is not what "Pliny himself, or any other spies that might creep into Christian assemblies" had been witnesses of: but what some persons, who confessed that they had formerly been Christians declared, upon their examination by a heathen judge. These apostates knew very well, that the Christians worshipped the Son in their prayers and praises as well as the Father. And it was natural for persons, in their case, to name the Son, Jesus Christ, in order to render the worship, which they had been prevailed on to renounce, and which was all the crime they had to alledge against their *quor-dam* brethren, the more odious to the heathen persecutors.

ON this subject, as on many others, the accounts which ecclesiastical writers of the first three centuries give us of the practice of the church, seems to be very defective. We meet with passages which intimate, that, in some churches, singing, as a distinct part of publick worship, was, for a considerable time, quite neglected. Augustine tells us that the church of Milan first began to sing in the time of Ambrose, and that of Africa in his own time. *

THAT the publick singing of human compositions was of no good name in the primitive ages of Christianity, is highly probable from the following passage in the decrees of the council of Laodicea, held about the middle of the fourth century. In canon 59th, it is decreed, that *no ιδιωτικῶν ψαλμῶν, psalms of private or human composition, should be sung in churches, nor any books read, which are not canonical.*

III. WE have such historical evidence as may satisfy us, that the scripture Psalms were sung in the worship of the church of

* Confess. lib. ix. cap. 7. and Retra. 2. lib. 5.

God before the fourth century. Tertullian, a writer of the third century, enumerating the exercises of the church's public worship, mentions the singing of psalms, as well as the reading of the scriptures, and the delivery of sermons.* And in another place, he intimates that the 133d Psalm was sung at the eucharist.† Nor can we think that the writers of the fourth and fifth centuries would have mentioned (as they do) the singing of psalms as the common and ancient practice of the church, if it had not been in use before the fourth century. Cyril of Jerusalem,‡ and Jerom, both writers of the fourth century, tell us that the thirty first and forty fifth psalms were sung at the eucharist. Augustine plainly intimates that this was the practice of his own church; for in one of his homilies,§ he takes notice, first, of the reading of the epistle, and then, of singing the 65th psalm. The following passage from Cassian, a writer of the fifth century, in vindication of the Egyptian monks, is remarkable. "Our elders" says he, speaking as a member of their society, "have not changed the ancient custom of singing psalms; but the devotions are performed in the same order as they were formerly in the meetings by night. For the hymns which it had been the custom in this country to sing at the end of the night-vigils that were concluded after cock-crowing, immediately before the dawn, were the same hymns which they sing at this day, namely, the 148th, and following Psalms, the 50th, the 62d, and 89th."**

FROM this passage, it is evident, First, that the Psalms of David were called hymns: and, therefore, when we read in the ancient writers of singing an hymn, without any farther explanation, we are rather to understand it of a scripture song, than of a human composition. Secondly, it is evident, that, in Cassian's time, the singing of David's Psalms was an ancient practice, *antiqua consuetudo Psalmorum*: which it could not then be called with any propriety, if it had not been in use before the fourth century. Hence, in order to vindicate the Egyptian monks from the charge of novelty, he tells us, that they sung the Psalms of David, and not any new hymns of human composition.

* De anima, cap. 9. † De Jejunio, Cap. 13. ‡ Catech. Myst. 5. n. 17. § Sermon. 10. De verbis apostoli. ** Cassian, lib. 3. cap. 6.

THOUGH Cassian was much infected with the error and superstition of his time, yet no writer is said to give a better account of the ancient usages of the church.

FROM an expression that occurs in some writers of the fourth century, namely, *That the psalms of David began to be sung at such a time and place*; it has been concluded, that, before that time, some other songs, or hymns of human compofure were sung in publick worship; but very unjustly: for the passages in which that expression is used, are to be understood, not of the Psalms of David coming in the place of human compofures formerly used; but of the exercise of singing, which, before, had been quite neglected; the psalms having been only read, like other parts of scripture. So Augustine is to be understood, when he complains of the malicious opposition which one Hilary made to the way of singing hymns out of the book of Psalms: which under his ministry, began to be used in the publick worship at Carthage, either before the offering, or when that which had been offered, was distributed to the people.*

IV. WE have great reason to be alarmed at the introduction of hymns of human compofure into our public worship: because the public singing of such hymns has often been made use of to prepare the way for, or to recommend, other schemes of heresy and corruption. The insnaring doxology of the Arians is well known, in which they used to ascribe *Glory to the Father, through the Son and the Holy Ghost*. The worship of the virgin Mary and other saints, in the church of Rome, appears to have been introduced, and is still much promoted, by the hymns that are sung to their praise. That the pretence of worshippers being more lively and devout in singing hymns of human compofure, than in singing the scripture songs, is not new, appears from the following passage of Augustine: † *The Donatists, says he, reproach us, because, at church, we soberly sing the divine songs of the prophets, while they inflame their minds with the poetical compositions of human genius*.

V. ALL the Reformed churches use the whole book of Psalms in their public praises: and the best Reformed, in their purest times, used no other. Though some of them, among other

* *Retract. lib. 2.*

† *Epist. 112, c. 18. Tom. 2.*

Popish corruptions, retained that of singing a few human compositions; yet the principle which is now so much insisted upon, namely, That the Psalms of David are unsuitable to the state or privileges of the New Testament church, was unknown among Protestants in the early days of the Reformation. It is perfectly agreeable to the harmony of their confessions, *ut ecclesia publice cantanda non permittat, nisi quæ prostant in scripturis*: That the church should allow nothing to be sung in her public worship, but what is found in the holy scriptures.

No. II.

THE public has been lately informed, that the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia, “appointed a committee to examine the different versions of the Book of Psalms, to which they could have access, and from them to select such a collection as they should judge best; and to lay it before the Synod, at a future meeting, for their consideration.”

THAT, “in pursuance of this appointment the Committee proceeded on the business; and, after a considerable time, reported to this purpose; That having compared such versions as they could obtain, they did not apprehend any so well calculated for Christian worship as that of Dr. Watts, as amended by Mr. Barlow of New England:” That “the version, thus amended, was then laid before the Synod for their consideration, who, after mature deliberation, gave it their judicial sanction, as may be seen in a printed extract from their minutes, bound up with the said version.”*

THIS is a matter, in which, as it affects the purity of divine worship, the whole Christian church is deeply concerned: It is, indeed, our duty to submit to the determination of church courts concerning articles of faith, or the manner of divine worship, when they are (what they ought to be) only examples of the due exercise of that authority which Christ hath given his ministers, to join together in exhibiting and applying, as particular cases require, the rule of his word, contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. But it is no less our

* Mr. Black's sermon on Psalmody. Page 46.

duty, to bear testimony against such of their determinations as are contrary to his word. Hence Christians ought, by no means, to acquiesce in the synodical determination now mentioned, till they have seriously and impartially considered, whether the imitation of the Psalms of David, by Doctor Watts, as corrected by Mr. Barlow, ought to be preferred, as more proper to be sung in our churches, than a close and faithful translation of those Psalms. As a mean of exciting church-members to this inquiry, and of assisting them in it, the following observations and tables of examples out of the Imitation, as corrected by Mr. Barlow, are humbly offered.

SECT. I. Of the Title of this Book.

THIS performance has been called a *version* or *translation*. But the comparing of a single verse of it with the original is sufficient to convince any one of the impropriety of this title: A title which is the more improper, as it is evident, that Dr. Watts himself did not mean to give his work to the public under the notion of a translation, but in his preface, as well as in the title-page, calls it *an Imitation* of the Psalms. The difference between a translation and an imitation is commonly well enough understood. He is not a translator who does not say the same thing in one language which his author says in another. But he may be a very good imitator of an author; he may copy his manner; and yet say very different things. Translation requires diligence and faithfulness: imitation gives full play to invention. Dr. Clarke translated Homer into Latin; but Virgil imitated him in the same language. Thus, Phædrus represents himself as an imitator, not a translator, of Æsop, when he says of his fables,

Quas Æsopæas, non Æsopi, nomino.

THE words of God, as well as his works, are inimitable. *There is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works.* The bold pretence, therefore, of imitating the Psalms of David, is to use a freedom with them, as if they were the word of man, and not, what they are in truth, the word of God. They that are of a contrite heart, *tremble at his word.**

* Isa. lxvi. 2.

Sect. II. A review of Dr. Watts's imitation of the first Psalm.

I SUPPOSE it will be allowed, that there is as little variation from the original in the imitation of the first Psalm as in any other. Indeed, it cannot be denied that, in the most, it is far greater: for in this, (what cannot be said of the most part of the imitation,) we have all the verses, and in the same order as in the original Psalm. That the reader may judge how little of the language of the original is retained in the imitation, he is presented with the following copy of the imitation of the first Psalm; the words or phrases different from those of the original being printed in italics.

- 1 Bless'd is the man who *shuns the place,*
Where sinners love to meet;
Who *fears to tread their wicked ways,*
And *hates the scoffer's seat.*
- 2 But in the statutes of the Lord
Hath plac'd his chief delight;
By day he *reads or hears the word,*
And meditates by night.
- 3 [He like a plant of generous kind
By *living waters set,*
Safe from the storms and blasting wind,
Enjoys a peaceful state.]
- 4 *Green as the leaf, and ever fair,*
Shall his profession shine;
While fruits of holiness appear,
Like clusters on the vine.
- 5 Not so the impious and unjust
What vain designs they form!
Their hopes are blown away like dust,
Or chaff before the storm.
- 6 Sinners in judgment shall not stand
Among *the sons of grace,*
When *Christ the Judge at his right hand*
Appoints the saints a place.

7 *His eye beholds the path they tread,
His heart approves it well ;
But crooked ways of sinners lead
Down to the gates of hell.*

It is to be observed, that there are no such Hebrew idioms in this Psalm, no such allusions to ancient rites, as could afford the Doctor the least pretence for his departure from the language of the original.

Whenever we are tempted to think that some other mode of expression would be better than that which is used by the inspired writer, we have reason to believe that we misapprehend the true meaning of the passage, or the force of the particular expression. The truth of this observation is, in some measure, illustrated by the following remarks on the Doctor's imitation of this Psalm.

Walking in the counsel of the ungodly means more than *shunning the place where sinners love to meet* ; for *counsel* here signifies whatever the ungodly would advise to, or whatever they deliberately design ; which comprehends a great deal more than the Doctor's phrase. He speaks of the passions of *fearing* and *hating* ; but the Psalmist uses such expressions as properly describe the habitual practice. The repetition of the *negative particle* is a beauty which the Doctor overlooked ; otherwise, one should think, he would have endeavoured to preserve it in some of his imitations. The same observation may be made with respect to the three words, *ungodly, sinners, scorers* ; of which many judicious commentators consider the second as setting forth a worse character than the first ; and the third, a worse than either of the two former : Such being the progress of that apostacy from which the Lord *preserveth the faithful*.

In the second verse, the Psalmist teacheth us, that it is the distinguishing character of the godly, to be endowed with a new principle of delight in the law of the Lord, and to be habitually meditating on it. The Doctor adds reading and hearing the word ; but without any propriety, these being ascribed to unbelievers as well as believers, Matt. xxii. 31. James i. 23. To be sure, none are godly who neglect the reading and hear-

ing of the word: but that which distinguishes the truly godly from others is their habitual meditation on the word with spiritual delight, Psal. cxix. 9. 7. Jerem. xv. 16. Besides, no good reason can be given for the Doctor's *distinguishing* the night as the proper season of meditation, when the Psalmist had represented day and night, *indiscriminately*, as the season of it; and, in a text just now cited, he represents this meditation as his exercise *all the day*.

In the third verse, the Psalmist compares the godly man to *a tree planted by the rivers of water*. But the Doctor, attempting to improve upon the Psalmist, has substituted *a plant of generous kind*. This implies that the fruitfulness and perpetual verdure of the tree (which the Doctor has changed, for what reason is not known, into a plant,*) are to be ascribed, partly at least, to the generosity or excellency of its nature or kind, and not solely, as the Psalmist's expression would lead us to think, to its plantation by *the rivers of water*: The Doctor's expression is contrary to the spiritual design of this metaphor; which is to teach us, agreeably to what we are taught in other places of scripture, as in Hosea xiv. 8. Ephes. ii. 8, 9, 10. that our sanctification is to be wholly ascribed to Jesus Christ, to the fulness of his grace and Spirit, represented by *the rivers of waters*; and not to any thing good or generous in our own nature. What the Doctor adds about being *safe from the storms and blasting winds, and enjoying a peaceful state*, is a wandering not only from the language and sentiments of the Psalmist, but from the subject: for what the Psalmist is here considering, is the continued fruitfulness of the tree, as proceeding from a permanent cause. Besides, the reader or singer that follows the Doctor, will be led into such an enquiry about the consistency of these two lines, with many places of scripture, which tell us, that the godly are tossed with tempests, and engaged in a continual warfare, as must greatly divert the mind from the particular point to which we are led by the simplicity and precision of the words of the Psalmist. In the fourth verse of the Doctor's imitation, he runs away with two words of the Psalmist, the *leaf* and *fruit*,

* A plant, says a very good judge of the English Language, is any vegetable production arising from seed; but, seems confined to such as are not very large. Thus saplings are the largest that should be called plants.

and gives us a loose descant upon them. He would here engage us in another difficult enquiry, namely, Whether, by *the unfading leaf*, the Psalmist means *the profession* of the Psalmist, as distinguished from *the fruits of holiness*: a difficult enquiry, for this among other reasons, That the profession of an upright heart is itself a fruit of holiness, Matt. x. 32. Rom. x. 10. In this expression, *his leaf shall not fade*, the Psalmist seems to prevent a misapprehension of the meaning of the foregoing expression, *that bringeth forth his fruit in season*; as if it meant, that the godly man is like fruit-bearing trees in respect of the circumstance of their leaf fading in the winter. No, he is like a fruit-bearing tree, that is also an ever-green. For though he will be careful to do good works of this or the other kind in their respective seasons; yet there is no season in which, so far as grace is in exercise, he will not be studious of doing good works of one kind or another. This view of the words is agreeable to the scope of the Psalmist, which is to set forth the perpetual fruitfulness of that principle of grace, or of delight in the law of the Lord, which is in the godly.

Further, the Doctor never can be excused for omitting, in all his three imitations of this Psalm, that emphatical and instructive expression, *in his season*; since there is so much of the beauty of a holy practice in giving every duty its own time and place. The Doctor ought to have confined himself to the illustration of the simile of the Psalmist; but, instead of doing so, he introduces another of his own; as if he thought, that the former was not sufficiently clear or pertinent, without the addition of *clusters on the vine*. These, to be sure, are very beautiful and delicious; but what they have to do here, the Doctor himself should have told: for it is not an ordinary capacity that can discover it. It is obvious, that the introduction of any thing, that distinguishes the vine from other fruit trees, was quite foreign to the design of the Psalmist.

The expression, *whatsoever he doth shall prosper*, is wholly omitted in the Doctor's first and second imitations: but at last, in the third, he gives us two lines in place of it:

*And heaven will shine with kindest beams
On every work his hands begin.*

Some unthinking readers may be more taken with this florid expression than with that of the Psalmist. But two things will occur to a considerate person: First, that the metaphor here introduced by the Doctor, being quite different from the simile of the Psalmist, does not easily unite with it, but rather hinders its effect. Secondly, that any meaning that can be put upon the common-place expression of *heaven shining with kindest beams*, namely, supposing it to signify the cause of prospering, is fully held forth to us by the Psalmist in that part of the simile, in which *the rivers of waters* are represented as the cause of fruitfulness.

In the imitation of the fourth verse of this Psalm, we have an example of the bad effect of multiplying words unnecessarily. First, we are informed, that the persons here spoken of, are both *impious* and *unjust*; as if some *impious* persons might escape this destruction, provided they were not also *unjust*. The second line of this stanza, (though the Doctor's punctuation would lead us to expect something wonderful in it,) is superfluous, the sense of it being sufficiently expressed in the third line; in which he says, *Their hopes* are blown away like dust before the storm. But this is far from the significance of the Psalmist's expression, which includes their *persons, professions, and works*, as well as *their hopes*. Surely these verses of the Doctor must be exceedingly disgusting to a person who has any proper relish for the noble simplicity of the original; *The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff, which the wind driveth away.*

In the next verse two words are used, *ungodly* and *sinners*, which, though often used as synonymous, are of different derivation and import; and it is not without design that they are both used here; it is to teach us, that no sort of transgressors, not even those that elude the severest trial of men, shall escape the judgment of God. Again, the Psalmist represents *standing in judgment*, and *standing in the assembly of the righteous*, in different members of the verse, as what are to be considered distinctly. These distinctions, which are strongly marked in the original, are utterly neglected in the Doctor's imitation. It is not the design of the Psalmist here, to shew which of the persons of the Godhead is to appear as Judge, or to describe the order of the judgment; but only to teach us, that the most exact discrimi-

mination of persons according to their respective characters, will then be made. That the second Person of the Godhead will be Judge, and that the saints will be placed at his right hand on the day of judgment, are revealed truths, but the introduction of them here, is impertinent.

In the last verse of this Psalm, we have a beautiful example of the scriptural brevity. In the first member of the verse, as, indeed, in many other places of scripture, the verb *to know*, is used figuratively, to signify the delight, which the Lord takes in observing the fruits of his own grace in his people. When the Doctor says, He beholds and approves the path they tread, he expresses somewhat of the sense, but in a prosaic and spiritless manner. The *antithesis* between the eye and the heart is a childish conceit: It suits Dr. Watts, but not the divine original; The last member of this verse is, *The way of the ungodly shall perish*. Here the way of the ungodly, by a figure, is put for the ungodly themselves. This metonymy serves, in a lively manner, to represent their obstinate attachment to their destructive courses. But the Doctor omits the figure, and tells his reader (what is, no doubt, somewhat of the sense, and would have been sufferable in a sermon) that *the crooked ways of sinners lead them down to the gates of hell*.* Who that has, not to say any reverence for the word of God, but even any relish for composition, can bear to see such dulness passed upon them, as a representation of the noble conclusion of the first Psalm? *The way of the ungodly shall perish*.

That the reader may see the great difference between such an imitation of the Psalms as we have now been reviewing, and a verse translation of them, it may not be improper here to lay before him the first Psalm, taken from the verse translation used by the church of Scotland; the supplementary words being printed in Italics.

That man hath perfect blessedness
Who walketh not *astray*
In counsel of ungodly men,
Nor stands in sinners way.

* If he had said *to the depths of hell*, it would have been more suitable to the sense of the text, than *to the gates of it*.

Nor sitteth in the scorners chair.
 But *placeth* his delight
 Upon God's law, and meditates
 On his law day and night.

He shall be like a tree *that grows*
 Near planted by a river,
 Which in his season yields his fruit,
 And his leaf fadeth never :

And all he doth shall prosper well.
 The wicked are not so :
 But like they are unto the chaff,
 Which wind drives to and fro.

In judgment, therefore, shall not stand
 Such as ungodly are,
 Nor in th' assembly of the just,
 Shall wicked men *appear*.

For *why* ? the way of godly men
 Unto the Lord is known :
 Whereas the way of wicked men
 Shall quite be overthrown.

Sect. III. Examples of the sense of the Psalms of David misrepresented by Dr. Watts's Imitation of them, as corrected and enlarged by Mr. Barlow.

Doct^r Watts says, that he has *translated the second Psalm according to the divine pattern, Acts iv. 24. &c.* But he confounds the translation in the 25 and 26 verses of that passage, with the use and application of the Psalm in verses 27 and 28. The Psalms ought to be read and sung in an exact and literal translation, like that in ver. 25 and 26. that the church and particular members of it may, every day, make that peculiar improvement of them which the peculiar circumstances of the day may require, after the example here set us by the apostles. As to the Doct^r's translation, it is just in the manner of the imitation of the first psalm, which we have already considered.

The reader is desired to observe, that the following are not meant as examples of mere defects or inaccuracies in the re-

presentation which the imitation gives of the sense of the psalms: A tolerable account of these would make a larger volume than the imitation itself. But they are passages in which another doctrine appears to be taught than what is to be found in the original psalms.

The Lord declares his heavenly birth, Psal. ii. long metre 5. The epithet [heavenly] applied to the necessary eternal generation of the Son, is inadequate, and therefore improper. If the Doctor meant our Lord's miraculous birth of the virgin Mary, he mistakes the meaning of the Psalmist, or rather grossly perverts it.

Justice and truth attend thee still,
But mercy is *thy choice*.

Psal. xlv. common metre. 5.

There is nothing in the original that represents mercy as more properly the choice of Christ than justice and truth.

The world admires her heavenly dress

Ibid. 2d. part, long metre 2.

There is no such thing in the original: and surely if by *dress* the doctor meant *gospel holiness*, it is rather hated than admired by the world. John xv. 19.

Should sudden *vengeance* seize my breath,
I must pronounce thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to *hell*,
The righteous law approves it well.

Psal. li. first part, long metre. 5.

This is the language of unbelief; or of a person who considers himself as standing in relation to God according to the tenor of the covenant of works. A language which could have no place in a representation of the exercise of true repentance exemplified in David, after the Lord had assured him that his iniquity was put away. Compare the inscription of this Psalm, with 2 Sam. xii. 13.

This life's a dream, an empty show;
But the bright world to which I go,
Hath joys *substantial and sincere*.

Psal. xvii. long metre. 4.

It is true, that the present life and its enjoyments, considered as a portion, and without respect to another life, or set in opposition to spiritual blessings, are an empty shew ; but the present life, even as contradistinguished from the future, is very important, as it is a preparation for the future : and the joys of true Christians, while here, are *substantial and sincere*, however small ; even their temporal comforts are real satisfactions ; God himself, the substance of all joy, being enjoyed in them.

A soul oppress'd with sin's desert
My God will ne'er despise.

Pfal. li. 2d. part, com. met. 4.

Cain and Judas had nothing of that broken and contrite heart, which the psalmist speaks of, and yet, it is manifest, their soul's were oppress'd with the desert of sin.

Vain hopes, and vain inventions all,
To 'scape the rage of hell.

Pfal. lv. com. met. 6.

It does not appear to be the design of the psalmist in the 6, 7, and 8 verses of this Psalm, to express his hopes, or to lay down any plan for his escape, but to set forth the disagreeableness merely of his situation by a beautiful figure.

He makes the saint and sinner prove
The common blessings of his love,

lxxviii. 3d. part, 4.

Saints and sinners share often in common the bounties of providence ; so that, according to Solomon's observation, we cannot distinguish love and hatred in this way. But no passage of scripture is recollected that represents God as having a common love to saints and sinners ; and sinners, too, that are to be eternally rejected.

When foes insidious wound my name,
And tempt my soul astray ;
Then let them fall with lasting shame
To their own plots a prey.

lxx. 2.

It is much more like a Christian to pray as the Psalmist does, that our enemies *may be turned back*, than that they should be suffered to go on in their plots, till they fall a *prey* to them : and especially, when their fall is to be attended, not merely

with such a temporary shame as may be conducive to their repentance, but with a shame that is *lasting* and indelible.

Thy first born Son, adorn'd and blest
With power and grace above the rest.

lxxx. 11.

Christ is, indeed, the Son of God, not through the power or grace committed to him as Mediator, but by an eternal and incomprehensible generation: But this is not the Sonship which the Psalmist here speaks of: The name here given him is *the son of man* not the Son of God.

“ Yet, Oh! that all my saints
“ Would hearken to my voice.”

lxxx. 5.

The Lord often uses this form of expression with respect to the visible church, which is here called *Israel* or *his people*, as in Deuteron. v. 29. xxxii. 29. Luke xix. 42. It is not recollected that the same form of expression is any where in scripture used, with respect to such as are already real *saints*.

With his rich gifts the heavenly dove
Descends and fills the place,
While Christ reveals his wondrous love,
And sheds abroad his grace.

lxxxiv. com. met. 3.

Here distinct offices are assigned to the Son and the Holy Spirit; the latter descending and filling the house, while the former reveals and sheds abroad his grace. This way of distinguishing the offices of these two persons of the Godhead has no warrant from this Psalm or any other place of scripture. The Son's revealing his grace is none of the things by which he is distinguished from the Holy Spirit: nay, it is by the Holy Spirit that the Son reveals his love and grace to us. It is of importance to take notice of this, because there are so many *enthusiasts* in our day who speak of a *Christ within them*, in such a manner, as utterly to confound the purchase of redemption by the Son, with the Holy Spirit's application of it.

O happy souls, that pray
Where God appoints to hear.

lxxxiv. short met. 3.

An unguarded expression which has nothing to countenance it in the words of the Psalmist. God has appointed us to pray every where (this is the language of the New Testament) without wrath or doubting.

Thus to the Son he sware and said,
With thee my covenant *first* is made.

lxxxix. 1st. part, long metre. 2.

The word *first* seems to imply, that the covenant of grace is to be made with others in the same or like sense in which it was made with Christ. But, agreeably to this Psalm and other places of scripture, it is to be maintained, that what was a covenant of works to Christ, is a covenant of grace and absolutely free promise to us. No believer is a party, contracting or performing the proper condition therein. Christ alone is so. Mai. xlii. 1, 6. liii. 10, 11, 12. lxiii. 3.

Remember, Lord, our mortal state,
How frail our life, how short our date!

lxxxix. 6th. part.

The last part of this Psalm is a lamentation of the low state of the church, of the various tokens of the Lord's displeasure, the breaking down of the outward fences, the reproaches of enemies, &c. But the imitator turns it into a sort of meditation on man's mortality, running away with some of the words of the 47 and 48 verses, regardless of the scope or connexion of them.

Believe, and take the promis'd rest;
Obey, and be for ever blest.

xcv. long metre, 7.

Here, obey and be blest, or, in other words, do and live, is represented as parallel to believe and be saved: If this representation be just, then there is no essential difference between law and gospel, between salvation by works and salvation by faith: or faith is but another name for obedience or good works.

Mercy and truth on *all* are met.

lxxxv. 2d. part 2

He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

xcviii. 2d. part 3:

These expressions seem very extravagant: as there is nothing in the original Psalms to countenance them; so they cannot well be justified but upon the blasphemous principle of universal salvation.

Remember what thy mercy did
 For Jacob's race, thy chosen seed;
 And with the same salvation blest
 The meanest suppliant of thy grace.

cvi. 1st. part. 3.

This is far less in the language of the New Testament than the original: for the imitator confines the love here spoken of to the outward distinction of Israel from other nations, and the salvation here mentioned to a temporal salvation. The words of the Psalmist; *Remember me with that love*, &c. may well be understood of God's eternal electing love, and his spiritual salvation.

I choose the path of heavenly truth,
 And glory in my choice.

cxix. 3d. part 2.

If *choice* here signifies any act or habit of the mind, (and what else can it signify here?) this *glorying* is equally far from the meaning of the 30 and 14 verses of this Psalm, and from a gospel spirit. The apostle speaks a very different language, Gal. vi. 14. Philip. iii. 8, 9.

What wonders hath his wisdom done!
How mighty is his hand!
 Heaven, earth and sea he fram'd alone
How wide is his command!

cxxxvi. common metre, 2.

Why has the imitator altered that sweet word so often repeated in this Psalm, *His mercy endureth for ever*; and often put laboured expressions of a different import in place of it? Is this, too, unsuitable to the gospel dispensation!!!

Thou art my portion when I die,
 Be thou my refuge here.

cxlii. 4.

The Psalmist declares, that God was *his portion in the land of the living*: that is, here as well as hereafter; while he lived, as well as when he died. Carnal men persuade themselves that they would have God for their portion when they die: but in the mean time, prefer the vanities of the world and the pleasures of sin.

Sect. IV. Examples of the strain of discourse used in the Psalms being altered by the Imitator.

Every attentive reader must have observed, that in the Psalms of David, there are various kinds of discourse, such as, assertion or doctrine, exhortation, prayer, narrative, promises, threatenings. It cannot be disputed by any who believe that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God*, that which soever of these kinds of discourse is used in any place of scripture, it is used to answer some important and necessary end: and no other kind of discourse would be so proper in the same place or connexion. He cannot therefore, be acquitted from the charge of presumption, who, in any place of scripture, substitutes another kind of discourse, instead of that which is actually used, as if he had found out one better adapted to the true scope and design of that place. Altering the strain of discourse is one way which the imitator has taken to disfigure the Psalms. In reading the xxxvii. 1, 3, 4, 5. the idea naturally occurs of an affectionate tutor exhorting and encouraging a beloved pupil in circumstances of great distress and danger. Every expression is dictated by the most tender regard and sympathy. This beauty is quite lost, by the imitator's rejection of the hortatory form of discourse.

The *Genus dicendi*, or mode of Speaking is

In the original,	In the imitation.
Psalms iv. 4, 5. An exhortation.	A profession that has too much the air of boasting.
xxv. 22 A prayer.	An assertion.
xxviii. 7. An account of the Psalmist's past experiences.	A prediction, or foretelling what was to be his attainment.
—9. A prayer.	A conditional vow or resolution.
xliv. 4, 5. A profession of faith and resolved obedience,—with a prayer.	A narrative.

In the Original.

In the Imitation.

Pſalm xlix. 1. An addreſs to the inhabitants of the world.

An addreſs to the ſons of pride.

lii. 8. A profeſſion of the particular application of faith.

A general propoſition.

lv. 22. An exhortation.

A profeſſion or declaration of his preſent exerciſe.

lx. 4. An acknowledgement of the Lord's mercy.

A prayer.

lxii. 5. A moſt beautiful *apophrophe*, or addreſs to his ſoul.

An aſſertion.

lxxxix. 6. The words of the church.

The words of the Father to the Son.

cxliii. 11, 12. A prayer.

An inference from the tenth verſe.

It may be obſerved here, that the Pſalms, in their original form, ſet before us the affections, deliverances, and exerciſes of the ſaints, as *real* examples for our encouragement in faith and prayer, and for our imitation. Now, when the Doctour changes the Pſalmiſt's representation of his own particular caſe into a general maxim, or into a representation of what is common to all the godly, we are deprived of the advantages now mentioned. In the imitation of the eighteenth Pſalm we have a *ſcilitious* deliverance from temptation, which is not David's, and which the Imitator does not give as his, inſtead of the real one.

Seſt. V. Examples of the Arrangement or Method of the Pſalms being altered by the Imitator.

That it was the deſign of the Holy Spirit, that we ſhould attend to the method he has been pleaſed to make uſe of in the ſcriptures, is evident, from the neceſſity of obſerving the arrangement and connexion of any diſcourſe, in order to the right underſtanding of it; from the connecting particles with which the ſcriptures abound; from the light we obtain as to the mean-

ing of a text, by a careful attention to the context; and from the dangerous errors into which many fall, by taking up with detached expressions, without considering their connexion with what goes before and what follows. All the scriptures having been dictated by the Holy Spirit, there is, in every part of them, an arrangement of matter, that is the fittest to answer his design: And therefore, the supposition that a different arrangement of the matter of the Psalms, is necessary in order to render them more proper to be read or sung in publick worship, implies, either that the Psalms were not designed to be used in publick worship, or that the Holy Spirit is not the author of them. It is absurd, to represent the occasional use of various texts in prayer and preaching as any way parallel to the Imitator's arrangement of the matter of the Psalms. The former is not substituted, as the latter, instead of the arrangement given by divine inspiration. When we use a variety of texts in prayer and preaching, we only mean to express the sense we have of the suitableness of such texts to our own present view, and circumstances. But the Imitator gives the publick his arrangement of the matter of the Psalms as more suitable than that of the original, to the state of the church under the New Testament dispensation, to the end of the world; for he mentions no other limitation of their superior suitableness. And we are told in the preface to Mr. Barlow's edition, that "were it not" [had it not been] "for his [Dr. Watts's] appropriation of some psalms, and his omission of a few others, his version would, doubtless, have been used for many ages, without any amendment:" Now, that appropriation having been corrected, and that omission supplied by the labours of Mr. Barlow, it follows undoubtedly, according to this prefacer, that the Doctor's version, in its present state, should be used for many ages without any further amendment. But this utterly destroys the parallel between Dr. Watts's arrangement of the verses of the Psalms, and the occasional application which is made of the various texts of scripture in prayer or preaching: For, in order to make them parallel, neither his arrangement, nor any other ought to be of standing use. We ought to have new poetical imitations every week, every day. The brains of our Dwights and of our Barlows ought to teem for ever with such productions. The truth is, we have no warrant, either to call the mere repetition of scripture, prayer, or preaching; or to esteem any alterations of the scripture Psal-

modity, or any humanly devised arrangements of it more proper for our publick singing, than the arrangements dictated by the Holy Spirit. And the pretended worship of God by such a preference, having no warrant in the precepts, promises, or example of scriptures, is but will-worship.

N. B. The verses mentioned in the following examples, are all quoted according to our Bible translation of the Psalms.

In the xxi. Psalm, David, having declared the Lord's peculiar kindness to his own people in verses 19, 20, and to himself in the 21, is naturally led, in the 22, to relate a passage of his own experience. The imitator, dissatisfied with this order, has thought proper to connect the last mentioned verse with the prayer, in the 15 and 16 verses.

In the xxxvii Psalm we have in the 2d part of the imitation, the 16, 21, 26, 25, 30, 31 verses, and in the 3d part, the 23, 24, 28, 29, 34, 35, 36.

In the l. Psalm, the 15 and 23 verses are joined together.

In Psalm lxviii. the 1—6, 32—35 verses are put together in one hymn, and the 17 and 18th are wrought up into another; and the 19, 9, 20, 21, 22 verses compose a third *

* To one who has given this Psalm a slight perusal the sentences appear abrupt and unconnected. But if we attend to the occasion, which was the removing of the ark to Zion, and consider David's frame at that time, (see the history, 2 Sam. vi. 12—23.) this apparent want of connexion will appear very natural. When one is greatly elevated, and transported with joy, on some great occasion, lively fallies, and rapid transitions of thought are natural. The mind seizes eagerly the delightful objects that in quick succession present themselves: and if, at the same time, we give our thoughts vent in language, we express them abruptly, and do not wait to mark the minute and almost imperceptible circumstances or causes that suggest them. Besides, there is a real connexion among the parts of this Psalm: there is a method pursued, exactly adapted to the matter, and the scope of it, though it may not be so obvious as in some other Psalms. See Pool, and other judicious commentators.

We should be cautious of attempting to accommodate the works or word of God, to our notions of regular arrangement: lest we only expose our own ignorance and want of taste; like those gardeners, who, as a fine writer observes, "spoil the natural beauty of their trees and shrubs, while they attempt to improve it by cutting them in the shape of pyramids, birds, or beasts." But it is not only foolish, but impious to attempt to amend the word of God.

In Psalm lxxi. ver. 16 is joined to the three last verses ; and the intermediate ones come afterward into a separate hymn.

In Psalm lxxxvii. any thing in the imitation, that is like the last verse comes before the matter of the 5 and 6.

Psalm cxix. much transposed.

Psalm cxxxv. is imitated in the following order : ver. 1—4, 14, 19, 5—12.

The verses omitted occasion a continual variation from the order and connexion of the original ; often a different beginning, as in the xxxi. and a different ending, as in the li.

SECT. VI. Verses of the Psalms omitted by the Imitator.

If we consider the work of Dr. Watts as a version, or translation, as some have affected to call it, the designed omission of so many verses, renders it good for nothing. If we consider it as a collection of as much of the book of Psalms, as the Doctor thought fit for Christian worship, a reproach is cast upon the remainder, as unfit for it ; although the wisdom of God appointed the whole of the Psalms to be sung in his worship——what the Doctor has left out, as well as what he has retained.

A List of verses omitted in Dr. Watts's imitation of the Psalms of David, corrected and enlarged by Joel Barlow.

Psalm.	Verse.	Psalm.	Verse.
v.	1, 2.	xxxviii.	8.
vii.	7.	xl.	12, 13, 14, 15, 16,
x.	32, 33, 31, 39, 40.		17.
xvii.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,	xli.	4—13
	9, 10, 11, 12.	xlvii.	2, 3, 4.
xxvi.	11, 12.	xlix.	2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17,
xxxii.	8, 9, 10, 11.		18.
xxxv.	1—11, 16,—28.	l.	2.
xxxvi.	12, 11, 12.	li.	6, 18, 19.
xxxvii.	17, 18, 19, 20.		

Pfalm.	Verfe.	Pfalm.	Verfe.
lv.	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.*	cv.	16—26.
lvii.	4, 6.	cvi.	6, 9, 10, 15—42.
lviii.	3.	cviii.	7—13.
lx.	6, 7, 8, 9.	cix.	5—31.
lxi.	6, 7, 8.	cxvi.	9, 10, 11.
lxii.	3, 4, 5, 6, 7.	cxvii.	13, 28.
lxiii.	11.	cxix.	4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 17, 22, 23, 31, 43, 45, 47, 48, 52, 56, 65, 66, 77, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 95, 101, 102, 106, 108, 109, 117, 124, 126, 131, 134, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 142, 144, 145, 146, 149, 151, 152, 155, 157, 167, 168, 169, 172, 173.
lxviii.	7, 8, 10—16, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28.	cxix.	8.
lxix.	22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28.	cxxxvii.	8, 9.
lxxi.	1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13.	cxxxviii.	4, 5.
lxxiv.	5, 23.	cxxxix.	19, 20.
lxxviii.	40—72.	cxl.	6—11.
lxxix.	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12.	cxli.	1, 7, 8, 9, 10.
lxxx.	18.	cxliv.	7, 8, 9, 10, 11.
lxxxii.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.	cl.	3, 4, 5.
lxxxvi.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, 17.		
lxxxviii.	5, 6, 7, 8, 9.		
xcii.	8.		
xciv.	3, 4, 5, 6, 15.		
xcvi.	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.		
cii.	22.		

The above is not given as a complete list of passages omitted. Besides whole verses, a long list might have been made of parts of verses omitted: How inexcusable is the Imitator in leaving out such expressions as these, *Who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity: God setteth the solitary in families?*

SECT. VII. Metaphors and similes of the Psalms left out by the Imitator.

The omission of these metaphors, whether plain language or other metaphors be substituted in the room of them, implies a

* It is astonishing how the imitator could overlook a passage so peculiarly beautiful and affecting as this description of David's suffering, from one who had been his intimate friend.

dishonourable reflection upon the author of the Psalms: For if plain language would answer the author's purpose as well, metaphors are unnecessary and improper: And if other metaphors be preferable, the author has made a wrong choice. The imitator's omission, therefore, of so many metaphors of the Psalms cannot well be reconciled to that profound reverence and superlative esteem which is due to all the words of God. The Lord's people find the scripture metaphors and similes to be incomparably fitter for setting forth spiritual things, incomparably more savoury and pregnant with instruction, than any other.

A list of Metaphors and Similes in the Psalms left out in the Imitation.

- Psalms ii. 9, 12. Like a potter's vessel. Kiss the Son.
 Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me. Thou hast smitten the cheek bone, &c.
- v. 9. Their throat is an open sepulchre.
- vii. 15. He made a pit, and digged it.
- x. 9. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den.
- xiii. 3. Enlighten mine eyes.
- xiv. 4. Who eat up my people as bread.
- xxi. 12. Thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings.
- xxii. 14. I am poured out like water.
- xxvii. 9. Lead me in a plain path.
- xxxvii. 20. The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs.
- xxxviii. 5. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.
13. I, as a deaf man, heard not, &c.
- xli. 3. Thou wilt turn all his bed in his sickness.
- xlii. 7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts.
10. As with a sword in my bones,—mine enemies reproach me.
- xliv. 3. Thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance.
19. Thou hast covered us with the shadow of death.

- Pfal. xlv. 8. All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, &c.
- xlv. 14. The virgins, her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.
- xlix. When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me.
- li. 7. Purge me with hyssop.
- lii. 2. Thy tongue deviseth mischief, like a sharp razor.
- lv. 21. His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.
- lvii. 4. My soul is among lions.
- lviii. 10. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
- lx. 3. Thou hast made us drink the wine of astonishment.
- lxiii. 5. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.
- lxvi. 11, 12. Thou broughtest us into a net : thou laidest affliction upon our loins.
- lxxii. 3. The mountains shall bring forth peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness.
9. His enemies shall lick the dust.
14. Precious shall their blood be in his sight.
16. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon.
- lxxiv. 14. Thou gavest him (the Leviathan) to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
- lxxv. 3. I bear up the pillars of the land.
8. In the hand of the Lord is a cup; and the wine is red : it is full of mixture, and he poureth out the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out and drink.
- lxxiii. 4. There are no bands in their death.
6. Pride compasseth them as a chain.
10. Waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.
17. I went into the sanctuary.
21. I was pricked in my reins.
- lxxvii. 2. My sore ran in the night.

- Pfal. lxxx. Stir up thy strength.
14. Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.
- lxxxi. 10. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
16. He would have fed them with the finest of the wheat.
- lxxxii. 5. All the foundations of the earth are out of course.
- lxxxii. 13. Make them (the combined enemies of Israel) like a wheel.
- lxxxiv. 6. Passing through the valley of Bacca, make it a well: the rain also filleth the pools.
- xcii. 10. My horn shalt thou exalt, like the horn of the Unicorn.
12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.
- xcviii. 3. Let the floods clap hands.
- ciii. 5. Thy youth is renewed like the eagles.
- cxii. 9. His horn shall be exalted with honour.
- cxiii. 7. He lifteth the needy out of the dunghill.
- cxxvii. 4. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth.
- cxxviii. 3. Thy children, like olive plants, round about thy table.
- cxxix. 3. The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows.
- cxxxi. 1. Mine eyes are not lofty.
- cxxxii. 17. There will I make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.
- cxlviii. 14. He exalteth the horn of his people.

Se&t. VIII. Remarks on Dr. Watts's Imitation with respect to Composition.

Though an author's manner of composition is hardly of sufficient importance to have any place in a discourse concerning what relates to the purity of God's worship; yet, as it is sometimes suggested, that the use of Dr. Watts's imitation would render our publick singing, more agreeable to persons of what is called a refined taste; and as, in proportion to the progress of learning among us, the publick will have a greater relish for cor-

rectness in composition, it may not be amiss to offer some remarks on the Doctor's performance in this view.

His inaccuracy in representing the sense of the Psalms is manifest: and we need not be surprized to find a performance, the whole of which is one continued debasement of a noble, of a divine original, abound with inaccuracies, even when considered by itself, or without regard to that original. The following is a list of some of the grossest errors in composition; under each of which are given examples out of this imitation, as corrected and enlarged by Mr Barlow.

I. UNGRAMMATICAL OR BALD EXPRESSIONS, that is, such as are contrary to the rules of grammar, to the idiom of our language, and to the acceptation of words among good writers.

1. Instances of an improper use, or application of words.

Psal. lxiii. 2d. part com. metre, 3. "While I *pursue* my God."

It is proper to speak of *following* the Lord, but not of *pursuing* him, as one does an enemy, whom he has defeated.

Psal. lxvi. 1st. part 6. "Ye saints fulfil his praise."

iii. com. met. 7. Arise, O Lord *fulfil* thy grace.

ix. 1st. part 5. Whose works his grace *fulfil*.

We commonly speak of fulfilling a promise or prophecy; but to fulfil praise or grace, is a phraseology peculiar to the Imitator.

Psal. cxix 5th. part, 6. And there I *write* thy praise.

xl. long metre. 7. And all creation *tune* thy praise.

We write a book, or tune a musical instrument, but to write or tune *praise*, is not English.

2. Instances of impropriety in construction. The following *infinitives* do not easily unite with the verbs going before.

Psal. xix. 1st. part 4. We are not *lest* to nature's voice
To bid us know the Lord.

lxxiii. short m. 6. But I, with flowing tears,
Indulged my doubts to rise.

3. Instance of absurd collocation.

Psal. xci 1st. part; 1. He that hath made his refuge God.

This is just as if, instead of saying, A certain method of teaching made the boys *good scholars*, a person should say, It made good scholars *boys*.

4. Instances of an improper use of Ellipsis. It is true words may sometimes be left out, agreeably enough to the Idiom of our language: but such broken incompleat expressions as the following are quite unjustifiable.

Psal. lxxxix. 2d part. 4. Thou mak'st the sleeping billows roll,
The rolling billows sleep.

Taking these words as they stand according to the idiom of our language, we conclude that the author means, that when the sleeping billows roll, then the rolling billows sleep: As this is nonsense, we at last find out that the author meant an ellipsis. But our language will not bear it.

Psal. lxxxiv. 5th p. 4. Once have I sworn, (*I need no more.*)
civ. 14. He gives them *wisdom where* to dwell.
iv. long metre 5. But, Lord, thy light and love we *pray*.

Instead of we pray *for* thy light, &c.

5. Instances of improper circumlocution.

Psal. lxxv. long metre, 2d p. 5. He settles in *a peaceful form*.
The author means *in peace*.

vi. long metre 5. My *thoughts* are tempted.
xxxvi. com. metre 1. Their *thoughts* believe.

Instead of *I am tempted, they believe*.

6. Instances of tautology, or ungrammatical superfluity of words.

Psal. cxxxix. 1st p. l. m. 4. Amazing knowledge *vast* and *great*.
com. m. 4. Within thy *circling* arms I lie.
Enclosed on every side.

xxvi. com. m. 7. When *mortal* comforts *die*.

lxxi. 2d. p. 6. His *death* has brought my foes to shame.
And sav'd me by his *blood*.

His blood here can signify nothing but his death; so that the Imitator says, *His death saved me by his death*.

II. THE ABUSE of FIGURES and METAPHORS. As the proper use of these constitutes one of the greatest beauties of composition; so the introduction of them without judgment or taste, is one of the greatest blemishes. Good writers are sparing in the use of them: the worst are full of them: who, as Mr. Pope says,

With gold and jewels cover every part,
And hide with ornaments their want of art.

1. The following instances of Personification are insufferable; The first is a personification of praise,

Psal. lxxxv. 3. We wait for *praise to tune* our voice.

Another, of the thoughts :

cxix. part 6th. 3. My *thoughts* in holy wonder rise,
And bring their thanks to thee.

Another, of the hours :

cxxi. long met. 3. He spreads the evening veil, and keeps
The silent *hours*, while Israel sleeps.

Here the hours are brought in as *mutes*: and the Supreme Being is represented as keeping them, while Israel, whose duty it is to keep them, is asleep. What shall we think of a composition in which divine subjects are treated in so ridiculous a manner?

2. There are frequent instances of metaphors incongruously heaped upon one another.

Psal. xl. 1st. part, 2. And from my *bonds* releas'd my feet,
Deep bonds of *miry* clay.

It is very proper to compare an afflicted condition to the situation of one entangled in miry clay, but when the Doctor makes *bonds* or *ropes* of this clay, calling them *deep ropes*, our ideas are quite confounded.

Psal. lx. 2. Thy *frowning* mantle spreads the sky.

The imitator might be allowed to represent a large cloud as a mantle: but when this mantle *frowns*, it becomes a person: and then we hardly know what it is, whether a cloud, a mantle, or a person.

Pfal. cxxxvii. 2. Let dire destruction seize *this guilty frame,*
My hand shall perish, and my voice shall cease.

V. LOW EXPRESSION, PUERILE CONCEITS, and a manner bordering on the BURLESQUE.

1. Instances of expression too low for the subject.

Pfal. xvi. 1st p. com. m. 5. He gives me sweet advice by day,
 And gentle hints by night

xliv. 1st p. l. m. 3. Dress thee in arms, most mighty Lord.

lxv. 3d p. 1. Visits the pastures every spring.

cxxxiii. com. m. 1. Lo, what an entertaining sight
 These friendly brethren prove.

2. Instances of puerile conceits.

Pfal. xxii. l. m. 5. They wound his head, his hands, his feet.
 Till streams of blood *each other meet.*

xvv. short m. 2. When will thy *hand* assist my *feet.*

cxix. part 1st. 2. With their whole *heart* they seek the
 Lord,

And serve him with *their hands.*

cvii. 4th part, 3. When land is *far* and death is *nigh.*

5th part, 6. Sailors rejoice *to lose* their fears.

3. Sometimes the doctor seems to imitate Hudibras, rather than David.

Pfal. xxii. l. m. 4. O savage people! cruel priests!
 How they stood round like raging beasts.

lxviii. 1st p. 3. He rides and thunders through the sky.

lxxiv. 5. How are the seats of worship broke?
 They tear the buildings down.

lxxxix. l. p. 2. Are not thy servants day by day,
 Sent to their graves and turn'd to clay?
 Lord, where's thy kindness to the just?

VI. INANITY, that is, when passages either convey no meaning, or, at least, no sort of instruction.

Pfal. xxix. 3. The *fearful* hart and *frighted* hind
 Leap at the terror of the sound.

Surely, it does not require a very terrible sound to make the hart and hind leap, especially when the one is *fearful* and the other *frighted*.

Pfal. civ. 8. From pleasant trees which shade the brink,
The lark and linnet *light to drink*.

What a phænomenon is here ! The wonder lies, not in their drinking, but in their *lighting to drink*.

Pfal. lxxxviii. 3. As, lost in lonely grief, I tread
The mournful mansions of the dead,
Or to some throng'd assembly go,
While here forgot and there unknown,
The change renews my piercing woe.

This representation of a person as alone in the midst of a throng'd assembly, and the change, simply considered, from the mansions of the dead to the society of the living, serving to renew his piercing woe, is too hard to be understood.

VII. PURE RANT and EXTRAVAGANCE.

Pfal. lv. com. m. 3. I groan with every breath !
cxxvi. 4. Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
To rivers of delight.
cxxxix. 1st p. com. metre, 8. I fly beyond the west.
cxlvii. long m. 1. Let heaven begin the solemn word,
And sound it dreadful down to hell.

A larger collection of examples might easily be made from the Imitation, but what we have given is sufficient for our purpose. If the preference given to Dr. Watts's Imitation had been only a fashionable folly in matters of literature; if it had been only an attempt to pervert the public taste, by bringing a wretched composition into credit; though, even in that case, I am far from thinking reprehension unnecessary, I would, however, have left the business to others of superior learning and experience in such matters, and have spared the reader and myself the trouble of so tedious an examination. But it is the common duty of Christians to bear testimony against the indignity done to the word of God, and against the corruption of his worship.







